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ABSENTEE VOTING AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL AND FEDERAL CIVILIAN E--ETC(U)

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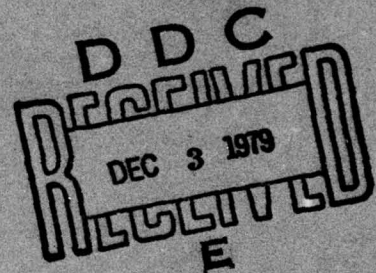
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# Absentee Voting Among Military Personnel and Federal Civilian Employees:

Findings From the 1978 Post-Election Voting  
Survey and a Survey of Unit Voting Officers

by  
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Absentee Voting Among Military Personnel and Federal Civilian Employees:  
Findings From the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey and a Survey of  
Unit Voting Officers

- SUMMARY -

Scope and Objectives

The Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955 established a permanent program of voting assistance for armed forces members, Federal civilian employees, members of the merchant marine, and other U.S. citizens who live away from their home states but wish to cast their ballots in Federal elections. Responsibility for the Federal Voting Assistance Program resides with a Presidential designee (currently the Secretary of Defense), whose representatives maintain liaison with state election officials, develop and disseminate voting information, and respond to inquiries concerning absentee registration and voting. After every general election the Presidential designee must submit a report to the President and the Congress on the activities of the Voting Assistance Program, a portion of which is to contain "statistical data related to absentee voting." Three surveys, two of which are described herein, were conducted to generate such data on absentee voting in the 1978 general election.

Two surveys were developed to gather information from prospective absentee voters: a survey of military personnel and overseas Federal civilian employees (the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey--Form A), and a survey of privately employed U.S. citizens living overseas (the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey--Form B). The latter survey is the subject of a separate report. A third survey, the Survey of Unit Voting Officers, was developed to provide an indication of how the Federal Voting Assistance Program is working at its primary level in the military services.

Approach

Stratified random sampling was employed in the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey (Form A). The military sample was stratified by service and pay grade. The original military sample included 17,500 servicemembers--1,500 officers and 2,000 enlisted personnel from each service (the four DoD components plus the Coast Guard). The population from which the service sample was drawn included servicemembers in all locations, continental United States as well as overseas.

The Federal civilian employee component of the sample was selected from the 13 agencies with the greatest number of overseas employees who were U.S. citizens. This sample was stratified by agency, with each stratum being proportional to a given agency's overseas civilian population. Only civilians assigned overseas were included in the survey



sample. In all, 2,434 Federal civilian employees were mailed survey questionnaires.

The Survey of Unit Voting Officers was distributed to a purposive (non-random) sample of 1,530 voting officers in the four DoD service components; time did not permit a more scientific sampling procedure. Since random sampling procedures were not employed, the data must be interpreted cautiously. Valid extrapolations to the population of voting officers cannot be made; however, the data do provide clear indications of problem areas, and they serve as a basis for developing a more methodologically sound survey prior to the next general election.

### Results

The major findings from the two surveys are summarized below:

#### 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey--Form A

- Among the respondents eligible to vote, only 13.9 percent of the military servicemembers (8.0% absentee and 5.9% at the polls), and 13.0 percent of the civilians (10.3% absentee and 2.7% at the polls) cast their ballots in the 1978 general election.
- Of the respondents who requested absentee ballots (both military and civilian) 14.5 percent never received them, and another 2.9 percent received them too late to vote.
- For both military and civilian respondents, the likelihood of voting increased with age. Also, among the military respondents the officers were considerably more likely to vote than enlisted personnel (27.6% versus 11.6%). And the differences between officers and enlisted personnel showed up even when age was held constant.
- The most frequently cited reason for not voting was lack of information on absentee voting procedures. For both respondent groups around two-thirds of the non-voters indicated that this had an effect on their failure to cast a ballot (66.9% of the military servicemembers and 61.3% of the civilians).
- In spite of the fact that fewer than one out of seven respondents voted in November, a much larger percentage claimed to be very interested in the election. Nearly one-third of the eligible military respondents (31.1%) and nearly half (46.0%) of the eligible civilians indicated that they were very interested in the 1978 election.
- The civilian news media were most frequently cited by the military servicemembers (86.3%) and civilians (71.9%) alike as being a useful source of information on the election and voting procedures.



- As one would expect, the military voting officer was the source of voting assistance most often indicated by the military respondents (70.9%). The civilian respondents also most frequently mentioned the military voting officer as their source of voting assistance (35.7%), but the U.S. embassy or consulate also received frequent mention (23.8%).
- Only 61.3 percent of the military respondents who said they needed voting assistance actually received it. Among the civilian respondents who needed assistance, only 44.6 percent received it.
- Among the military respondents who needed and received voting assistance, 23.7 percent voted in November; but only 3.5 percent of those who needed but did not receive help cast their ballots. For the civilian respondents the difference was even greater: 36.5 percent of those who needed and received help voted in the election, compared to 2.9 percent of those who needed but did not receive assistance.

#### Survey of Unit Voting Officers

- The majority of the voting officers who responded to the survey were junior officers in pay grades 0-1 to 0-3.
- Well over a third (38.4%) of the voting officers reported that they spent less than one percent of their time in 1978 on their voting officer duties.
- Over two-thirds of the voting officers said that they had held that duty for less than 11 months.
- Only 8.4 percent of the responding voting officers reported that they had received some form of classroom instruction in their responsibilities. Most (85.5%) had received only informal briefings.
- Eight out of ten voting officers (80.7%) felt they had all the information they needed to answer voters' questions. The frequently mentioned information needs of those who didn't have all the information they required were: any/all information available; the Voting Assistance Guide; and more specific information on the requirements of the various states.
- Nearly one-fifth (18.9%) of the voting officers had not received a copy of the 1978 Voting Assistance Guide, and 12.2 percent said that they did not have sufficient quantities of Federal Post Card Application forms (FPCAs).

- The majority (71.5%) of the responding voting officers said that they had counseled between one and 49 persons. Over a third (37.8%) had counseled fewer than ten persons.
- The most common information/assistance requests reported by unit voting officers were: information on voting dates and deadlines; mailing addresses of election officials; and requests for FPCAs.
- The most commonly reported problems associated with absentee voting were: ballot not received or received too late to vote; the absentee voting process takes too long; and servicemembers did not have enough information on candidates and issues.
- The suggestions for improving the Federal Voting Assistance Program most frequently given by voting officers were: distribute the Voting Assistance Guides in a more timely manner; do more to inform servicemembers about the elections and voting procedure at an earlier date; and provide unit voting officers with more information.

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## FOREWORD

This report presents the findings of two surveys, the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey (Form A) and a Survey of Unit Voting Officers. Both surveys were conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) for the Federal Voting Assistance Program (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Comptroller) under contract MDA 903-75-C-0128.

The 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey (Form A), distributed in November and December 1978, solicited information on the absentee voting experiences of a random sample of military servicemembers (both inside and outside the United States) and Federal civilian employees assigned outside the United States. The Survey of Unit Voting Officers was distributed in October and November 1978 to a purposive sample of military voting officers and counselors in the four Department of Defense service components. A third survey conducted under this procurement, the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey (Form B), was distributed to a sample of privately employed U.S. citizens living overseas, and will be discussed in a separate report.

The technical monitor for this study was Mr. Henry Valentino, Director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program. His advice and support contributed materially to the successful performance of this research. Captain Ronald Friddle, legal advisor for the FVAP, also provided invaluable assistance by coordinating survey activities with the participating military components and Federal agencies.

The Intran Corporation of Minneapolis, Minnesota printed, mailed, and processed the machine-readable questionnaires used in the absentee voter survey. Their responsiveness and the expertise and guidance provided by Mr. Dennis Dillon, Vice President for Program Management, made it possible to launch the survey under severe time constraints.

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), under the direction of Mr. Kenneth C. Scheflen, provided computer support for the analysis of both surveys. Mr. Leslie W. Willis, a programmer/analyst with DMDC, was a helpful advisor on all of the data processing tasks.

The research was performed by HumRRO's Eastern Division in Alexandria, Virginia under the direction of Dr. Robert J. Seidel. The principal investigator for this study was Mr. John A. Richards. Dr. Thurlow R. Wilson, an in-house consultant, provided advice on sampling and data analysis. Research assistance was provided by Ms. Judith C. Pumphrey.

All interpretations and comments that depart from the factual presentation of survey data reflect solely the views of the author. They do not necessarily represent the opinion or policy of the Department of Defense.



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The Fifth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-Sixth Amendments of the Constitution collectively guarantee the right to vote (the first two indirectly; the last three directly) to all United States citizens over the age of eighteen. And though the Constitution prescribes no mechanism for ensuring one's ability to vote while away from one's home state, many states, since the early colonial days, have provided the means for their citizens to vote in absentia.

The best example of absentee voting assistance provided by the individual states occurred during the Civil War when, for the first time in our history, large numbers of men of voting age were unable to vote at the polls (women, of course, had not yet been enfranchised). The first Federal effort to provide absentee voting guarantees was the Soldier Voting Act of 1942, though a measure to provide for absentee voting by soldiers and sailors during World War I had been proposed but not enacted. However, the provisions of the 1942 Act were extended only to members of the armed forces. Furthermore, since they were based on the war-time powers of Congress, they were not permanent.

After World War II, President Truman urged Congress to enact legislation to provide a standing program of assistance for those who must be absent from their home state on election day. The result was the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955. This Law, based largely on the Soldier Voting Act, recommended that the individual states enact

legislation to provide for absentee voting and registration for members of the armed forces and merchant marine and their spouses and dependents, and employees of the Federal government and civilian service organizations affiliated with the armed forces and their spouses and dependents. The last two categories were later changed to include all U.S. citizens temporarily living outside the United States. The Act also directed the President to appoint the head of a Federal agency to coordinate the government's efforts to assist absentee voters. President Eisenhower, who signed the legislation into law, assigned this responsibility to the Secretary of Defense, with whom it has since remained.

More recently, Congress has passed legislation to extend absentee voting assistance to citizens living outside the United States on more than a temporary basis, the Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act of 1975, and a group of measures designed to increase the ease and uniformity of the absentee voting process for all concerned, the 1978 Amendments to the Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act of 1975. The impact of the recent amendments to the Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act, however, will not be felt until the 1980 general election.

In spite of the efforts of Congress to develop a comprehensive program of assistance for absentee voters, the act of exercising one's franchise while away from one's designated polling place remains fraught with difficulty. To identify these difficulties and to seek out their causes, the Secretary of Defense, as the Presidential designee under the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955, gathers statistical data from absentee voters through the administration of post-election surveys. The results



of these surveys, which are authorized in 42 U.S.C. 1973cc-11, are included in his biennial report to the President and the Congress.

To provide a broad base of information on absentee voting in the 1978 general election, three groups were surveyed: 1) military personnel stationed worldwide and Federal civilian employees assigned outside the United States, 2) privately-employed (or non-employed) U.S. citizens living outside the United States, and 3) unit voting officers in the four Department of Defense service components. The last group was added this year in an effort to tap into what should be an excellent source of information on how the Voting Assistance Program is working in the field. The large network of military unit voting officers and counselors comprises an important component of the program. They are the front-line representatives who actively assist servicemembers in their efforts to vote. In addition to providing first-hand feedback on the effectiveness of the Voting Assistance Program, the unit voting officers are able to indicate the kinds of problems servicemembers are encountering in their efforts to vote.

The results of the survey of military personnel and Federal civilian employees and the survey of military unit voting officers will be discussed in this report. The survey of other U.S. citizens living outside the United States will be the subject of a companion report.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology

The data presented in this report are based on two surveys, the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey--Form A, which was distributed to a sample of military servicemembers and Federal civilian employees, and the Survey of Unit Voting Officers, which was distributed to voting officers and counselors in the four Department of Defense service components. Sampling for the Post-Election Voting Survey was accomplished using probability sampling procedures, while sampling for the Survey of Unit Voting Officers, for reasons described below, was non-random. A detailed description of the methodology for each survey is presented in this chapter.

#### 1978 POST-ELECTION VOTING SURVEY--FORM A

Military personnel and Federal civilian employees working outside the United States constitute the largest segment of the absentee voter population, hence they were the primary focus of this study. A stratified random sample of 20,000 military personnel and Federal civilian employees was selected for the study. This was broken down into a world-wide sample (continental United States included) of 17,500 military servicemembers, and a sample of 2,500 Federal civilian employees assigned outside the United States.

The military portion of the sample was stratified by service, the strata being the four Department of Defense components and the Coast Guard, and two rank groupings--officers and enlisted personnel. From each service 3,500 persons were selected for the sample--2,000 enlisted



personnel and 1,500 officers. The sampling frame was each service's master personnel file. The actual sample selection process, including the printing of self-stick mailing labels, was performed by the survey branch or personnel services division of each service. Because the activities selecting the samples for the services have professional staff members who are experienced in survey sampling, only general guidelines were provided (see Appendix B). The guidance consisted primarily of specifying the sample size and requesting that the sample be selected using a random process, preferably one based on social security number terminal digits.

The Federal civilian employee component of the sample was stratified by agency. The 13 Federal agencies or activities with the largest number of civilian (U.S. citizen) employees assigned outside the United States were selected to participate in the survey.\* The overseas civilian workers employed by these agencies comprise 85 percent of all Federal employees who are U.S. citizens assigned outside the United States.

Among the selected agencies, sampling quotas were assigned based on the proportion each agency's overseas employee population constituted of the total for the 13 agencies. For example, the Department of Agriculture had 1,116 overseas employees who were U.S. citizens, or 2.1 percent of the total for all participating agencies. Therefore, its quota was 2.1 percent of 2,500 (the size of the combined civilian employee sample) or 53 employees.

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\* The basis for determining the agencies to be included was the June 1978 edition of Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics, published by the U.S. Civil Service Commission.

Each agency was given guidelines for selecting its portion of the survey sample. Since the offices responsible for selecting the various components of the civilian employee sample did not, in most cases, have resident sampling experts, the instructions for accomplishing this task were more detailed than those provided the military services. The guidelines issued to the participating Federal agencies are reproduced in Appendix B.

The table below lists the 13 agencies selected to participate in the survey. For each agency the table gives the number of civilian employees assigned overseas who are U.S. citizens, the percentage its overseas employees comprise of the total for the 13 participating agencies, and the assigned quota of overseas employees to be included in the survey sample.

Table 2.1  
Civilian Overseas Employee Quotas by Agency

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Quota</u>
Army	16,325	31.1	776
DoD Dependent Schools (DODDS)	8,268	15.7	393
Navy	6,846	13.0	326
State Department	5,761	11.0	274
Air Force	5,568	10.6	265
Panama Canal Company	2,087	4.0	99
Canal Zone Government	1,657	3.2	79
A.I.D.	1,381	2.6	66
Department of Agriculture	1,116	2.1	53
Int'l. Communications Agency	1,039	2.0	49
Treasury Department	916	1.7	44
Justice Department	803	1.5	38
Department of Transportation	799	1.5	38
	52,566	100.0	2,500



After the quotas had been assigned and the agencies notified, one agency--the Treasury Department--had to be deleted from the group because the majority of its 916 overseas employees are Puerto Rican nationals. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, but obviously they do not have to vote by the absentee process while working in Puerto Rico. This reduced by 44 employees the size of the civilian sample. Also, due to administrative problems the Justice Department was able to provide only 22 names out of its assigned quota of 38. Thus, the civilian overseas employee sample was reduced to 2,434 before the surveys were mailed.

#### The Survey Instrument

The questionnaire developed for the 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey (Form A) was a four-page, machine-readable form (see Appendix A). Most of the questions were carried over from those included in the 1976 Post-Election Voting Survey. This was done for two reasons. First, the 1976 survey was successful in generating the information needed to develop a fairly clear picture of the voting experiences of the survey population. Second, the present study was not funded until October 1, 1978, a scant five weeks before the survey was to go into the field. Using questions from the 1976 survey eliminated the need for time-consuming pretest activities and considerably shortened the time required to obtain the necessary clearances (though this was more of a factor with Form B, the survey of non-Federally employed citizens living overseas, which had to go through the lengthy clearance process required by the Office of Management and the Budget).

Two important items were included in the 1978 survey that did not appear on the 1976 questionnaire: 1) respondents were asked to identify the state from which they had requested an absentee ballot, and 2) those who had requested an absentee ballot were asked to indicate when they mailed their request, when they received their ballot (if at all), and when they returned their completed ballot. These questions were included to provide some indication of trouble spots in the absentee voting process.

The questions on the survey form may be divided into eight areas:

- eligibility
- affiliation (service or agency)
- voting behavior
- sources of assistance
- sources of information
- interest in the election
- reasons for not voting
- voting by spouse and other dependents

Five of the items allowed the respondent to write in responses not listed among the alternatives. Samples of the write-in responses were selected for content analysis. The samples included 100 responses per service per item from the military respondents and all of the write-in responses from the civilian respondents (since there were significantly fewer civilian respondents). The results of the content analysis will be incorporated in the presentation of the results of the computer analysis presented in the following chapter.

The survey forms were distributed by mail to individuals selected for the sample. Each person received a questionnaire, a cover letter, and a franked, pre-addressed return envelope. The original survey administration plan called for mailing all the questionnaires immediately



following the 1978 general election. In other words, mailing was to have begun on November 8th and should have been completed by the end of that week. However, due to the unusually short lead time the services and agencies were given to process the requests for sample selection and mailing labels, the mailing activities had to be extended well beyond the election week.

The mailing labels for all of the military services were in hand by the 22nd of November, but the last set of labels for the civilian employee sample was not received until the day after Christmas. The mailing, therefore, was conducted over a six-week period, each portion of the sample being mailed as soon as the labels were received.

#### Response Rate

To determine the response rate for the survey, the original sample size will have to be adjusted downward so that only those who received questionnaires are included in the computation. As already mentioned, the sample of civilian employees was reduced to 2,434 before the surveys were mailed. That figure will have to be further reduced by the number of questionnaires that were returned by the post office as undeliverable. For the civilian employee sample the number of forms returned by the post office was 167, or 6.9 percent of the 2,434 mailed out. The adjusted sample size for the civilian employees, that is the number assumed to have received a questionnaire, is 2,267. From the sample of military servicemembers 1,113 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, or 6.4 percent of the 17,500 survey forms mailed out to this group. Therefore, the adjusted sample size for military servicemembers is 16,387. The combined Form A sample is adjusted to 18,654. Table 2.2 below shows

the number of undeliverable questionnaires, the associated percentage of undeliverable forms, and the adjusted sample size for each component of the Form A sample.

Table 2.2  
Undeliverable Questionnaires and Adjusted Sample Sizes  
for the Survey of Absentee Voters--Form A

<u>Component</u>	<u>No. Forms Undeliverable</u>	<u>% Forms Undeliverable</u>	<u>Adjusted Sample Size</u>
Army	227	6.5	3,273
Navy	403	11.5	3,097
Marine Corps	159	4.5	3,341
Air Force	172	4.9	3,328
Coast Guard	152	4.3	3,348
Civilian	167	6.9	2,267
Total	1,280	6.4	18,654

Most of the questionnaires returned by the post office were sent back either because the addressee had moved or because the address information was insufficient or incorrect. In a few instances forms sent to military personnel were returned with the notation that the individual had been discharged. In many cases the questionnaire was simply returned with a slash across the address label, so it was impossible to make a precise determination of the number of survey forms returned for various reasons. The most plausible explanation for the large number of undeliverable questionnaires is that it is due to a combination of the



frequency of military reassignments and the short duration of most overseas assignments for Federal civilian employees, and the lag time before personnel actions are recorded on the master personnel files.

The response rates, based on the adjusted sample size for each of the Form A survey components, are presented in the following table.

Table 2.3  
Response Rates for Absentee Voter Survey--Form A  
Based on Adjusted Sample Size

<u>Sample Component</u>	<u>Adjusted Sample Size</u>	<u>No. Forms Returned*</u>	<u>Response Rate</u>
Army	3,273	1,642	50.2
Navy	3,097	2,021	65.3
Marine Corps	3,341	1,787	53.5
Air Force	3,328	2,133	64.1
Coast Guard	3,348	2,147	64.1
Civilian	2,267	942	41.6
Total Sample	18,654	10,772	57.7

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\* The number of returned questionnaires for the six sample components adds up to 10,672, 100 short of the total number of returns, due to respondents who failed to indicate their service or agency.

The major discrepancy in the response rates occurs in the differences between the rates for the military and civilian components of the sample. While all the military components show response rates at between one-half and two-thirds of their respective adjusted sample sizes, the response rate for Federal civilian employees serving overseas was

considerably less than one-half of the adjusted size of the civilian sample. There is no obvious reason for this observed discrepancy. It is possible that military personnel are more inclined to respond to requests that come from "higher headquarters," even when the response is voluntary.

In order to create population estimates, the survey data for the military components of the sample were weighted. As indicated earlier, each military sample was the same size, 2,000 enlisted personnel and 1,500 officers. At the time the samples were drawn no attempt was made to make them proportional to the number of officers and enlisted men in the respective services. But to allow one to generalize to the survey population, each stratum in the sample has to be multiplied by a factor that will adjust its representation in the sample to be equal to its representation in the population.

The military portion of the sample was stratified by service and pay grade group. Weighting factors were therefore generated for each service-pay grade cell. For purposes of weighting, the Coast Guard was included with the DoD service components. Each service was weighted so that its representation in the sample would be proportional to its representation in the combined DoD-Coast Guard population. The weighting factors are presented in Appendix D.

The Federal civilian employee portion of the voter survey sample was selected as a self-weighting sample; that is, the sampling quota for each civilian agency was proportional to the representation of its overseas employees in the population of overseas civilian employees for

the participating agencies. Therefore, no weights were needed for this component of the sample.

### Confidentiality

Participation in the absentee voter survey was strictly voluntary and those who did participate did so anonymously. No identifying information was requested on the survey questionnaire (only two demographic items--age and citizenship--appeared on the form and those were required to determine voting eligibility). Only one copy of each mailing label was produced and no back-up roster of names and addresses of those surveyed was maintained.

### SURVEY OF UNIT VOTING OFFICERS

The Survey of Unit Voting Officers was conceived as a way to obtain helpful information on the absentee voting process from a somewhat different perspective than that of the absentee voter and as a means to get feedback on how the Federal Voting Assistance Program is working at its point of contact with the electorate. Unfortunately, the methodology for this survey was a casualty of time--or rather the lack of it. As already mentioned, this study did not begin officially until five weeks before the election. Yet, it was considered desirable to get the voting officer survey into the field prior to election day so respondents would still be involved in performing their voting officer duties (and therefore would be keenly aware of difficulties in the system).

Under the given time constraints, launching a survey in conformity with the best principles of scientific research--developing, pretesting,



revising, and printing the survey instrument and obtaining the information needed to select a random sample of adequate size to produce reliable results--would have been a herculean task bordering on the impossible. Alternatives less time-consuming than a large-scale survey were considered: for example, personal interviews could have been held with a small sample of voting officers. This would have produced some useful information on the program that could also serve as a basis for developing a questionnaire to be administered prior to the 1980 general election. This alternative, however, was rejected because the number of voting officers that could have been interviewed would have been too small to provide meaningful feedback. Therefore, the decision was made to field a full-scale survey. A questionnaire would be developed and distributed to a fairly large, purposive sample of voting officers. The form would have to go into the field untested, but it would reflect areas of interest to the FVAP staff. The rationale for this decision was that the information yield would be much greater than that from personal interviews, and the information could still be used to develop a more scientifically pure survey for the 1980 election.

Thus, with the understanding that the data would be indicative but would not allow generalizations to the population of voting officers, the survey was developed and distributed. The sampling strategy was based on the desire to obtain a large enough data base to allow for a meaningful analysis--that is, one that would provide a large number of cases in each cell after cross-tabulating variables of primary interest. The sample had to be kept small enough, though, to ensure that the survey

could be distributed in a short period of time. A sample target of 1,500 voting officers was established.

On short notice the voting representatives of the four DoD service components were able to give only very rough estimates of the number of voting officers in their respective branches. The estimates ranged from approximately 22,000 in the Air Force to fewer than 300 in the Marine Corps. The three major services, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, were assigned sampling quotas of 420 voting officers each. This was broken down to 20 questionnaires to each of their 10 largest CONUS and 10 largest OCONUS installations, and two questionnaires each to 10 of their smaller installations. The Marine Corps, which had considerably fewer voting officers, was given a quota about half the size of the other services' quotas: 200 questionnaires for its 10 largest commands worldwide and two questionnaires each to 10 of its smaller installations. Based on this formula the combined sample for the survey would be 1,480 voting officers, close to the targeted size.

The actual distribution followed the spirit but not the letter of this plan. Each service had to alter the distribution to fit its own unique pattern of geographic dispersion and its existing distribution channels. The Army, Navy, and Air Force actually sent out more than 420 questionnaires each, but the Marine Corps had to distribute fewer than its quota of 220. The actual number distributed by each service was:

Army	430
Navy	460
Air Force	440
Marine Corps	<u>200</u>
Total	1,530

Hence, the original sample for the Survey of Unit Voting Officers was a purposive sample of 1,530 voting officers from stateside and overseas commands.

### The Survey Instrument

The instrument used in the Survey of Unit Voting Officers was a one-page, 15 item questionnaire. It was designed for ease of completion; in most cases the form could be filled out in five to ten minutes. The return mailing address and indicia were printed on the back of the form so that, once completed, it was simply folded, taped, and mailed.

The areas covered in the questionnaire were: background of the respondent, availability of information and materials, number of people who requested assistance, the kind of help most often sought, most common complaints concerning absentee voting and registration, states posing the greatest difficulties for absentee voters, and suggestions for improving the Voting Assistance Program.

Rather than being mailed to specific individuals (which would have been a difficult task considering the turnover among voting officers), the questionnaires were distributed through normal channels so that each command selected to participate was responsible for getting the survey to its voting officer(s). Distribution of the surveys began during the last week in October; however, due to the vagaries of the various distribution systems, it is not possible to tell when it was completed. Some of the more remote units, especially ships at sea, obviously received their questionnaires considerably later than the major commands.



### Response Rate

The returns from the Survey of Unit Voting Officers were accepted until January 22, 1979, when the key punching and data analysis were begun. By that date, 961 questionnaires had been returned. The following table shows the number of returns and response rate by service. Note that the response rate for this survey is based on the number of forms distributed. Since the survey was not distributed by mail, there is no way to determine how many of the questionnaires actually reached voting officers.

Table 2.4  
Response Rates for Survey of Unit Voting Officers

<u>DoD Component</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>No. Forms Returned*</u>	<u>Response Rate</u>
Army	430	267	62.1
Navy	460	229	49.8
Marine Corps	200	143	71.5
Air Force	440	321	73.0
DoD Total	1,530	961	62.8

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\* The number of returns for the four services adds up to 960, one short of the DoD total, because one respondent failed to identify his service.

The substantially lower response rate on the part of Navy voting officers may well be a reflection of difficulties inherent in the Navy distribution system. Due to the nature of Navy service, at any given

time a large portion of its personnel are in transit from one location to another. This, of course, makes for considerable delays in the distribution of mail and official correspondence. In fact, 23 survey forms were received after the cut-off date for accepting returns; 18 of these were from Navy units afloat.

As discussed earlier, the sample for the Survey of Unit Voting Officers was non-random. As a result, one cannot safely extrapolate the survey data to the entire population of unit voting officers. Weighting the data would, therefore, be meaningless, so no weighting factors were applied during the analysis of this survey.

### Chapter 3

#### 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey: Military Personnel and Federal Civilian Employees

Surely, few would question the fact that the experiment in democracy established by the framers of our Constitution has been a great success. In its 200-year history, it has survived the test of numerous internal and external crises that would have toppled a less durable system of government. But only a conscientious and active electorate can guarantee the perpetuation of a representative democracy in this country. Lack of involvement by qualified citizens could ultimately lead to a de facto oligarchy, a situation in which a large proportion of the population must submit to the rule of leaders in whose selection they took no part.

In the 1978 general election, ballots were cast by fewer than half (45.9%) of those eligible to vote, according to Bureau of Census figures. This is not a hopeful sign. Yet, among those who live away from their voting districts the percentage who voted in the last election was substantially lower than that. This difference suggests problems in the absentee voting process that tend to inhibit participation. The responsibility for voting lies with each citizen, but it is up to the government to do everything possible to ensure that citizens who wish to vote have a reasonable opportunity to do so. Such is the purpose of the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955 and other legislation designed to assist those who must vote by the absentee process.

In spite of these Federal voting assistance efforts, there are obviously problems in the process which remain unresolved. In this chapter, the results of the survey of military personnel and overseas Federal civilian employees will be thoroughly examined in an effort to unearth factors



that may discourage or prevent absentee voting. The discussion will cover patterns of participation in the 1978 general election, reasons for not voting, ballot transmission problems, sources of information and assistance, and level of interest in the election.

In interpreting the data presented in this chapter, the reader should keep in mind the following considerations:

- (1) For all tables, the Ns and percentages represent the number of respondents who answered the questions on which the data are based. Therefore, the Ns for a given subgroup will vary slightly from table to table.
- (2) Most of the tables in which data from the military sample are presented are based on weighted data, as explained in Chapter 2. Any table based on unweighted data will be clearly marked as such. Unlike the military sample, the civilian sample is self-weighting; that is, proportionate sampling was employed. Thus, no weights were applied to the data on civilian respondents.

## ELIGIBILITY

So that the analyses would be based only on data from the appropriate population, all respondents who were not eligible voters were removed from the data base. This was relatively easy to do since there are only two criteria--age and U.S. citizenship. Table 3.1 below shows the actual numbers and percentages (unweighted) in the survey sample who were not eligible to vote in the 1978 general election.

Table 3.1  
Percent of Respondents Not Eligible To Vote Based  
on Two Criteria  
(Ns and Percentages based on unweighted data)

<u>Sample Component</u>	<u>Under 18 Years of Age</u>		<u>Not a U.S. Citizen</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Army	2	0.1	17	1.1
Navy	4	0.2	25	1.3
Marine Corps	5	0.3	20	1.2
Air Force	1	0.0	15	0.8
Coast Guard	1	0.0	5	0.3
Total Military	13	0.1	82	0.9
Civilian	-	-	13	1.4
Total Sample	13	0.1	95	1.0

About one percent of the respondents fell into one of the two ineligible categories. Most of these were ineligible because they were not U.S. citizens. It is surprising that the sample component with the largest number of non-U.S. citizens was the civilian Federal employee group, since they were supposed to be citizens by definition (as is clear from the sampling instructions in Appendix B). Nevertheless, all of the ineligible respondents will be eliminated from the sample. Future tables will be based only on eligible respondents.

#### PROFILE OF ELIGIBLE RESPONDENTS

Though only a few items of background information were requested on the survey form (service/agency, age, rank, and length of time at present duty station), the information derived from these items provides at least

a partial profile of the respondents and serves as a basis for analyzing the responses related to absentee voting. In Table 3.2 the age distribution of eligible survey respondents is compared by sample component.

Table 3.2  
Age Distribution of Eligible Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Army</u> (N=3338)	<u>Navy</u> (N=2365)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=831)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=2537)	<u>Coast Guard</u> (N=167)	<u>Total Military</u> (N=9238)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=879)
18-20	28.4	25.7	42.5	16.1	18.4	25.4	1.7
21-24	27.6	30.9	29.5	27.8	33.3	28.8	5.9
25-34	30.2	29.9	20.1	35.5	32.1	30.7	30.9
35-44	12.0	12.2	7.0	18.1	14.3	13.3	29.4
45-64	1.8	1.3	1.0	2.6	1.8	1.8	32.1

<sup>a</sup> Base: all eligible respondents

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

Two patterns are immediately obvious--overall, the age distribution for the military respondents is skewed toward the lower (younger) end of the scale, and the age distribution for the civilian respondents is almost a mirror image, being skewed toward the higher (older) end of the scale. The age distribution is fairly consistent across the services, but Air Force and Coast Guard respondents generally tended to be older than military respondents as a whole, while the Marine Corps respondents tended to be younger. Still, the differences between the military and civilian samples were much more dramatic than those among the service components.



The age distribution among officers and enlisted personnel also shows some interesting differences.

Table 3.3  
Age Distribution Among Officer vs. Enlisted Military Respondents\*  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Officer</u> (N=1257)	<u>Enlisted</u> (N=7980)
18-20	0.2	29.4
21-24	10.3	31.7
25-34	50.6	27.6
35-44	31.9	10.4
45-63	7.1	1.0

\* Base: Eligible Military Respondents.

The officers, predictably, tend to be older than the enlisted respondents: most officers (82.5%) were between 25 and 44 years old, while the majority of enlisted respondents (61.1%) were between the ages of 18 and 24.

The comparison of the officer and enlisted military respondents by service reveals a very consistent pattern. In each service the overwhelming majority of respondents (86.4% for all services) were enlisted personnel. The differences among services were small.

Table 3.4  
Distribution of Officers and Enlisted Personnel by Service\*  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

	<u>Army</u> (N=3510)	<u>Navy</u> (N=2407)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=864)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=2604)	<u>Coast Guard</u> (N=171)	<u>Total Military</u> (N=9557)
Officer	12.9	12.1	9.8	17.0	16.6	13.6
Enlisted	87.1	87.9	90.2	83.0	83.4	86.4

\* Base: Eligible Military Respondents

Survey respondents were asked to indicate how long they had been at their present duty station to see if this factor interacts with voting behavior. Table 3.5 gives the distribution of responses for each sample component.

Table 3.5  
Length of Time at Present Duty Station<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Time At Duty Station</u>	<u>Army</u> (N=3494)	<u>Navy</u> (N=2405)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=859)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=2597)	<u>Coast Guard</u> (N=171)	<u>Total Military</u> (N=9526)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=948)
Less Than 2 Months	8.3	11.0	11.4	5.7	8.9	8.5	3.9
2 to 4 Months	13.3	10.2	13.7	9.4	14.1	11.5	7.9
More Than 4 Months	78.4	78.8	74.8	84.9	77.0	79.9	88.2

<sup>a</sup> Base: All Eligible Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

It appears that most of the respondents had been stationed at their present location for more than four months. The military respondents were somewhat more likely to have been at their duty station for four months or less (20.0% vs. 11.8% for civilians), but across the services the figures were fairly stable.

#### PARTICIPATION IN THE 1978 GENERAL ELECTION

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, fewer than half of the eligible citizens voted in the 1978 general election. Though this is a disappointingly small turnout, it seems large when compared to the percentage of those in the survey sample who voted. Table 3.6 shows for each component of the sample the percentage who took various voting actions.

Table 3.6  
Voting Action Taken by Eligible Survey Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Voting Action Taken	Army (N=3467)	Navy (N=2395)	Marine Corps (N=846)	Air Force (N=2572)	Coast Guard (N=170)	Total Military (N=9450)	Civilian (N=948)
Didn't Re-quest Ballot	83.3	79.7	82.4	78.2	78.6	80.9	81.0
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	5.1	4.2	5.6	3.6	2.6	4.5	4.2
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	0.6	0.6	1.4	1.4	0.8	0.9	1.7
Voted Absentee	6.8	8.3	6.3	9.6	9.3	8.0	10.3
Voted At Polls	4.1	7.2	4.3	7.2	8.7	5.9	2.7

<sup>a</sup> Base: All Eligible Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).



Combining the percentage of who voted absentee with the percentage who voted at the polls, only 13.9 percent of the military respondents and 13 percent of the civilian respondents voted in November--in each case, less than one-third the proportion of the total U.S. population who voted. There was some variation within the services, with only 10.6 percent of the eligible Marines casting ballots, while 18 percent of the Coast Guard respondents voted.

Apparently, more would have voted if they had received their ballots. In both the military and civilian samples around four percent of the respondents said that they had requested but not received a ballot. This subject will be discussed more fully in the next section.

As anyone who follows election polls knows, voting behavior varies according to demographic characteristics. An analysis of the voting actions taken by the respondents to this survey cross-tabulated by age does indeed show an unmistakable trend.

Table 3.7  
Voting Action Taken by Age Group: Military Respondents\*  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

Voting Action Taken	18-20 (N=2302)	21-24 (N=2628)	25-34 (N=2821)	35-44 (N=1221)	45-64 (N=163)
Didn't Request Ballot	87.9	83.6	78.1	71.1	63.5
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	5.2	4.9	4.0	3.3	1.0
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	0.5	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.0
Voted Absentee	4.5	6.6	9.7	12.3	17.3
Voted At Polls	2.0	3.7	7.3	12.6	18.3

\* Base: Eligible Military Respondents.

Table 3.8  
Voting Action Taken by Age Group: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Voting Action Taken</u>	<u>18-20</u> (N=15)	<u>21-24</u> (N=52)	<u>25-34</u> (N=271)	<u>35-44</u> (N=254)	<u>45-64</u> (N=275)
Didn't Request Ballot	93.3	92.3	79.0	82.3	77.1
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	6.7	1.9	4.1	5.1	4.4
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	--	--	2.6	0.8	2.2
Voted Absentee	--	5.8	12.5	9.8	12.0
Voted At Polls	--	--	1.8	2.0	4.4

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Civilian Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

For the military respondents, the percentage who voted increases steadily with age from 6.5 percent for the 18-20 year olds to 35.6 percent for those over 45. The proportion of civilian respondents who voted also increased as a function of age, but the trend was less pronounced.

It is interesting to compare this trend with Bureau of Census figures for the entire U.S. population.

Table 3.9  
Percent of U.S. Population Who Voted in 1978 Elections  
by Age Group\*

<u>18-20</u>	<u>21-24</u>	<u>25-34</u>	<u>35-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>
20.1	26.2	38.0	50.1	58.6

\* Based on figures provided by the U.S. Bureau of Census

As with the military respondents to this survey, voting among the U.S. population as a whole clearly shows a positive relationship to age, though the percentages in each age group are about three-times as high.

A comparison of the officers with the enlisted respondents in the military sample also shows substantial differences.

Table 3.10

Voting Action Taken by Officer vs. Enlisted Military Respondents\*  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

<u>Voting Action Taken</u>	<u>Officer (N=1290)</u>	<u>Enlisted (N=8158)</u>
Didn't Request Ballot	68.3	82.9
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	2.6	4.7
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	1.5	0.8
Voted Absentee	17.2	6.5
Voted At Polls	10.4	5.1

\* Base: Eligible Military Respondents

Well over one-quarter (27.6%) of the officers voted in 1978 compared to less than 12 percent (11.6%) of the enlisted respondents. To see if this difference resulted from the fact that the officers as a group were much older than the enlisted respondents, the analysis was rerun controlling for age. In all age groups, officers were more likely to have voted than enlisted personnel. Thus, age is not the primary reason for the observed differences in this analysis.

It is likely that some of the respondents who did not vote had just recently arrived at their duty station, and the turmoil associated with becoming settled in a new job at a new location may have hampered their



voting efforts. In Table 3.11 the voting actions of the respondents are analyzed by length of time at present duty station.

Table 3.11  
Voting Action by Length of Time at Present Duty Station<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Voting Action Taken	Military			Civilian		
	Less Than 2 Months (N=801)	2 to 4 Months (N=1095)	More Than 4 Months (N=7519)	Less Than 2 Months (N=36)	2 to 4 Months (N=75)	More Than 4 Months (N=822)
Didn't Request A Ballot	83.7	83.5	80.1	80.6	76.0	81.8
Requested But Didn't Receive A Ballot	5.3	4.1	4.4	2.8	4.0	4.4
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	0.3	0.5	1.0	--	2.7	1.6
Voted Absentee	4.9	8.0	8.3	8.3	14.7	10.1
Voted At Polls	5.8	3.9	6.1	8.3	2.7	2.2

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Weights apply only to military sample; civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

Only 8.5 percent of the military respondents had been at their present duty station for less than two months (see Table 3.4), but among this group the percentage who voted in the 1978 election was lower than that for those who had been at their duty station for longer periods of time. Among the civilian respondents only 3.9 percent had been at their present duty station for less than two months. Paradoxically, though, the percentage of this group who voted was greater than that for the civilians who had been on their present job for more than four months. Because the number of people

in the civilian group who had been at their present location for less than two months is quite small (36), the percentages should be viewed with caution.

To make absentee registration and voting a little bit easier, Congress, in the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955, designed a multi-purpose ballot request form that could be used by all states for various requests and requirements related to absentee voting. The Federal Post Card Application form, or FPCA, contains blanks for all of the information required by most states to request an absentee ballot (though it has several uses--see the facsimile in Appendix C and refer to the discussion on the FPCA in Chapter 4). Table 3.12 shows, for those who requested an absentee ballot, the proportion who used the FPCA.

Table 3.12  
Means of Applying for Absentee Ballot<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

	<u>Army</u> (N=306)	<u>Navy</u> (N=201)	<u>Marine</u> <u>Corps</u> (N=80)	<u>Air</u> <u>Force</u> (N=309)	<u>Coast</u> <u>Guard</u> (N=16)	<u>Total</u> <u>Military</u> (N=913)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=114)
FPCA	89.2	82.6	83.8	84.1	81.2	85.3	86.0
Other Means	10.8	17.4	16.2	15.8	18.8	14.7	14.0

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible respondents who applied for an absentee ballot.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

The FPCA is obviously the most popular means of obtaining an absentee ballot, at least among the respondents to this survey. Only 14.7 percent of the military respondents and 14 percent of the civilian respondents requested absentee ballots through some other means.

Table 3.13  
Means of Applying For Absentee Ballot By Officer  
vs. Enlisted Respondents\*  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

	<u>Officer</u> (N=227)	<u>Enlisted</u> (N=686)
FPCA	90.7	83.5
Other Means	9.2	16.5

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\* Base: Eligible military respondents who applied for an absentee ballot.

Among the military respondents who requested absentee ballots, enlisted servicemembers were more likely to use some means other than the FPCA (16.5% vs. 9.2% for officers). This may reflect a greater awareness of the availability of FPCAs among officers; however, the survey data offer no clues as to the reason for the difference.

Question 17 on the survey form (see Appendix A) was an attempt to assess directly the reasons for not voting in the election. The question contains a list of reasons for not voting with the instruction that the respondent should indicate the extent to which each reason applies to him/her. After each reason is a five-point scale ranging from "none" to "very much." Apparently many respondents found this format awkward or confusing, a fact which they freely indicated in writing on the form. The problem seems to be that they tried to answer the question without reading the stem, which would make the scale hard to interpret. This indicates that the question should be either changed or redesigned before the next Post-Election Voting Survey; also, it may mean that the responses are colored to



some degree by this problem, though it is impossible to tell the extent to which this might be so. The results of the question are displayed in the following table.

Table 3.14  
Reasons for Not Voting Given By Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Reasons For Not Voting</u>	<u>Army (N=2825)</u>	<u>Navy (N=1882)</u>	<u>Marine Corps (N=703)</u>	<u>Air Force (N=1964)</u>	<u>Coast Guard (N=129)</u>	<u>Total Military (N=7497)</u>	<u>Civilian (N=747)</u>
Not Aware Of The Election <sup>c</sup>	59.6	53.5	61.3	50.8	47.6	55.7	43.2
Not Interested In Politics	63.2	54.2	55.9	53.3	50.7	57.5	43.0
No Candidate Preference	58.9	62.5	58.9	64.9	59.8	61.4	55.4
My Vote Wouldn't Matter	49.7	45.8	44.7	41.1	41.3	45.9	34.7
Effect On Tax Obligation	42.4	38.2	37.3	34.9	33.1	38.8	35.7
Lacked Info. On Procedure	67.9	70.2	69.7	61.9	57.9	66.9	61.3
No Legal Voting Residence	31.9	25.8	26.1	18.5	23.3	26.2	27.0
Other	14.7	17.4	16.2	18.7	22.8	16.7	22.4

<sup>a</sup> Base: Non-Voting Eligible Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Percentages for each reason represent non-voting respondents who indicated that the reason applied to them some, fairly much, or very much (see Question 17 on the survey form - Appendix A). Note that respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each reason applied to them.

One good sign is that the results are quite consistent, especially across service components. Thus, the amount of distortion caused by confusion over the question must be small. The two main reasons for not voting stand out pretty clearly. Lack of information on absentee voting procedures leads the list, followed by no candidate preference. This was true for both military and civilian respondents. This is an important finding, for it indicates that about two-thirds of those who are eligible to vote through the absentee process but decline to do so are at least partly discouraged by a lack of information on absentee voting procedures. The second most commonly cited reason for not voting, no candidate preference (61.4% for the services and 55.4% for civilians), may be as much a reflection of post-Watergate disenchantment as it is an indication of apathy. The same may also be said for the large number of respondents who indicated that they were not interested in politics or the election (57.5% for military respondents and 43.0% for civilians). But only apathy can account for the fact that so many non-voting respondents said that they weren't even aware that there was an election (55.7% military, 43.2% civilians).

Cross-tabulation of the reasons for not voting with age reveals several patterns, as can be seen in Tables 3.15 and 3.16.

Table 3.15  
Reasons for Not Voting By Age: Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Reasons For Not Voting</u>	<u>18-20</u> (N=1310)	<u>21-24</u> (N=2196)	<u>25-34</u> (N=2122)	<u>34-44</u> (N=792)	<u>45-64</u> (N=93)
Not Aware of The Election <sup>b</sup>	63.7	58.8	49.5	47.3	30.8
Not Interested In Politics	61.6	60.5	53.9	50.2	33.9
No Candidate Preference	58.5	59.3	63.7	67.1	64.7
My Vote Wouldn't Matter	47.6	47.6	43.6	42.4	37.0
Effect On Tax Obligation	41.7	39.9	35.8	37.9	23.8
Lacked Info. On Procedure	80.7	70.3	59.6	45.7	30.3
No Legal Voting Residence	31.3	27.7	21.5	22.2	15.3
Other	14.8	15.8	18.4	20.2	24.7

<sup>a</sup> Base: Non-Voting Eligible Military Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages for each reason represent non-voting respondents who indicated that the reason applied to them some, fairly much, or very much (see Question 17 on survey form - Appendix A). Note that respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each reason applied to them.



Table 3.16  
Reasons for Not Voting By Age: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Reasons For Not Voting</u>	<u>18-20 (N=12)</u>	<u>21-24 (N=44)</u>	<u>25-34 (N=222)</u>	<u>35-44 (N=209)</u>	<u>45-64 (N=200)</u>
Not Aware Of The Election <sup>c</sup>	66.7	72.7	45.5	40.7	37.5
Not Interested In Politics	83.3	59.1	48.6	41.1	34.0
No Candidate Preference	75.0	65.9	57.2	58.4	47.5
My Vote Wouldn't Matter	50.0	34.1	36.5	38.3	30.0
Effect On Tax Obligation	41.7	31.8	33.8	41.6	34.0
Lacked Info. On Procedure	75.0	88.6	70.3	61.2	49.0
No Legal Voting Residence	66.7	27.3	24.8	29.2	28.0
Other	--	18.2	21.6	21.5	26.5

<sup>a</sup> Base: Non-Voting Eligible Civilian Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Percentages for each reason represent non-voting respondents who indicated that the reason applied to them some, fairly much, or very much (see Question 17 on survey form - Appendix A). Note that the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each reason applied to them.

First, it is plain to see that among the non-voting military respondents those in the younger age groups were considerably more likely than their older counterparts to refrain from voting due to lack of information on procedures. The percentage slides steadily from 80.7 percent for the 18 to 24 year olds to 30.3 percent for the 45 to 64 year olds. This trend is also seen among the civilian non-voters, though to a much lesser extent. Also, for both civilian and military non-voters, younger respondents were more likely to be apathetic, since a much greater proportion claimed that they were unaware of the election or not interested in politics or the election. In fact, the younger respondents were more likely in general to indicate that the reasons listed in Question 17 applied to them. The older respondents, however, were more inclined to write in some other reason for not voting.

An analysis of reasons for not voting by officer versus enlisted military respondents shows a similar pattern, as shown in Table 3.17 on the following page. The enlisted non-voters were more likely than the officers to say that any given reason applied to them. The officers did mention one reason with greater frequency than the enlisted respondents--no candidate preference. Also, a greater percentage of the officers wrote in other reasons for not voting. Age differences between these two groups did not have a significant effect on this analysis. A content analysis was performed on the other reasons for not voting given by respondents. The results appear in Tables 3.18 and 3.19.

Table 3.17  
Reasons for Not Voting By Officer Vs. Enlisted Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

<u>Reasons For Not Voting</u>	<u>Officer (N=853)</u>	<u>Enlisted (N=6648)</u>
Not Aware Of The Election <sup>b</sup>	26.1	59.5
Not Interested In Politics	29.1	61.1
No Candidate Preference	66.1	60.8
My Vote Wouldn't Matter	28.5	48.1
Effect On Tax Obligation	21.2	41.1
Lacked Info. On Procedure	43.2	70.0
No Legal Voting Residence	11.5	28.0
Other	30.4	14.9

<sup>a</sup> Base: Non-Voting Eligible Military Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages for each reason represent non-voting respondents who indicated that the reason applied to them some, fairly much, or very much (see Question 17 on survey form - Appendix A). Note that respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each reason applied to them.



Table 3.18  
Other Reasons For Not Voting Given By Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>

<u>Content Category</u> <sup>b</sup>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Not Familiar With Candidates/ Issues	137	24.1
Too Busy or Apathetic	129	22.7
On TDY/At Sea/In Boot Camp	56	9.8
Didn't Receive Ballot Or Other Voting Forms	48	8.4
Don't Like The Candidates	40	7.0
No Help/Information/Emphasis From Command	27	4.7
Out Of Home State Too Long	26	4.6
Only Vote In Presidential Elections	22	3.9

<sup>a</sup> Based on a content analysis of write-in responses to Question 17. The data were hand tabulated and thus are not weighted.

<sup>b</sup> Only the most common responses are listed. In all, 569 responses from military respondents were analyzed; the categories listed in this table account for 485 responses, or 85.2 percent of the total.

Table 3.19

Other Reasons For Not Voting Given By Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>

<u>Content Category</u> <sup>b</sup>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Too Busy or Apathetic	57	25.9
Not Familiar With Candidates/Issues	36	16.4
Didn't Receive Ballot Or Other Voting Forms	35	15.9
Don't Know How/ Couldn't Get Help	27	12.3
Out of States Too Long	13	5.9
Don't Like The Candidates	12	5.4

<sup>a</sup> Based on a content analysis of write-in responses to Question 17. The data were hand tabulated and, as with all civilian sample data, are unweighted.

<sup>b</sup> Only the most common responses are listed. In all, 220 responses from civilian respondents were analyzed; the categories listed in this table account for 180 responses, or 81.8 percent of the total.

In both tables the two leading categories are apathy and lack of familiarity with candidates and issues, though the orders are reversed. The apathetic group includes respondents who admitted that they were just too lazy to vote or had procrastinated. The respondents who indicated that they lacked familiarity with the candidates and issues are simply saying that they are reluctant to vote when they have no basis on which to make an informed decision. The respondents who said that they had been away from their home states too long, also fit into this category. Note that around one out of ten of the non-voting respondents who wrote in their reasons for not voting said that they had requested but never received their ballot or other voting forms (8.4% for military respondents and 12.3% for civilian respondents).

Tables 3.20 and 3.21 show the voting actions taken by spouses and dependents of the survey respondents.

Table 3.20  
Voting By Spouse In The 1978 General Election<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

	<u>Military</u> (N=5395)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=731)
Voted Absentee	5.4	10.5
Voted At Polls	11.2	3.7
Didn't Vote-Not Eligible	14.3	12.7
Didn't Vote But Eligible	58.2	67.0
Don't Know	10.9	6.0

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Respondents with spouses.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).



Table 3.21  
Voting By Eligible Dependents In 1978 General Election<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

	<u>Military</u> (N=1166)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=964)
Voted Absentee	1.6	3.0
Voted At Polls	18.2	24.1
Didn't Vote	53.6	33.8
Don't Know	26.6	39.2

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Respondents with eligible dependents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

It appears that among both respondent groups the spouses voted at about the same rate as or just slightly higher than the respondents themselves. The dependents, however, were noticeably more likely to have voted than the respondents. Part of this difference may well be due to the fact that many of the dependents were not living with the respondents and did not have to vote by the absentee process, though this of course is speculation.

## BALLOT TRANSMISSION

Even the best of intentions on the part of the voter and the most timely and effective assistance offered by the Federal Voting Assistance Program will not insure that a given individual will be able to cast his ballot. Each request for a ballot must be received and acted upon in a timely manner by the state in which the individual is attempting to vote. And here lies the source of a persistent problem for absentee voters--ballot transmission delays. This is a complex problem and one that is not likely to go away--at least not until we enter the age of remote electronic voting.

It is beyond the scope of this study to tease out the myriad factors associated with unanswered ballot requests. To be sure, part of the problem must lie with the requester--it is easy to overlook some of the requirements imposed by the various states. And, undoubtedly, many people miss the "window" of time during which their states will accept absentee ballot requests. Also, a portion of the problem must be attributable to processing delays and administrative errors on the part of the various state and local election officials. But a precise analysis of this issue must await a separate study devoted specifically to it.

The data from this survey do show how long it took respondents to receive their ballots. The pattern of ballot request versus receipt dates is depicted in Table 3.22 on the following page.

The period of time during which the greatest proportion (37.2%) of survey respondents requested ballots was one to two months (31 to 60 days) prior to the election. This should be far enough in advance of

Table 3.22

Days Before Election Ballot Requested By Days Before Election Ballot Received<sup>a</sup>  
(Unweighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Days Before Election Ballot Requested	More Than 150 Days (N=11)	Days Before Election Ballot Received								After Election (N=45)	Never Received (N=225)
		121-150 Days (N=9)	91-120 Days (N=26)	61-90 Days (N=68)	31-60 Days (N=244)	16-30 Days (N=463)	6-15 Days (N=380)	1-5 Days (N=84)			
More Than 150 Days	90.9	77.8	26.9	17.6	7.4	4.1	1.6	--	2.2	18.2	
121-150	9.1 <sup>c</sup>	22.2	38.5	25.0	6.1	3.0	2.6	3.6	--	7.6	
91-120	--	--	30.8	35.3	13.5	5.2	3.2	3.6	8.9	9.3	
61-90	--	--	--	22.1	43.9	16.8	9.7	7.1	11.1	21.3	
31-60	--	--	3.8 <sup>c</sup>	--	29.1	59.6	34.5	31.0	28.9	26.7	
16-30	--	--	--	--	--	11.2	40.5	26.2	31.1	8.4	
6-15	--	--	--	--	--	--	7.9	26.2	15.6	8.0	
1-5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.4	2.2	0.4	

<sup>a</sup> Base: All eligible respondents who requested an absentee ballot.

<sup>b</sup> Since this variable shows the time it took respondents to get their ballot, which is not likely to vary by individual characteristics, the data for all respondents were aggregated and left unweighted.

<sup>c</sup> These two figures should be ignored, since they obviously represent incorrect markings by the respondents (each of these figures represents only one respondent).



the elections to assure the requester that his ballot would arrive in time to enable him to vote. Though, over a quarter (28.9%) of those who reported that they received their absentee ballots too late to vote had mailed their requests during this time period. Likewise, over a quarter (26.7%) of those who never received their ballots had mailed their requests during this period of time.

The same phenomenon occurs for those who requested their ballots 61 to 90 days before the election (19.0% of all respondents who requested ballots). Of those who received their ballots too late to vote, 11 percent had requested them two to three months before the election; and of those who never received their ballots, 21.3 percent had requested them during this time.

Among all respondents who requested absentee ballots, 2.9 percent received them after the elections and 14.5 percent never received them. In other words, more than one out of every six respondents who requested absentee ballots (17.4%) were unable to vote in the last election. This figure varies appreciably by state as Table 3.23 illustrates.

There were too few cases for most states to allow reliable percentages to be computed, but the ten states with sufficient cases are enough to show that the variation among states is considerable. Among the respondents who requested absentee ballots from Connecticut, 5.2 percent received their ballots late or never received them at all, while the figure for Michigan was five-times as great, or 26.4 percent.

Table 3.23

Respondents Who Received Ballot Late or Not At All By State<sup>a</sup>  
(Unweighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

State	Total N For State	Ballot Late Or Never Received		State	Total N For State	Ballot Late Or Never Received	
		N	%			N	%
Alabama	12	4	*	Missouri	20	6	*
Alaska	14	3	*	Montana	4	-	-
Arizona	8	-	-	Nebraska	3	-	-
Arkansas	8	2	*	Nevada	5	1	*
<u>California</u>	143	28	19.6	New Hampshire	23	-	-
Colorado	11	2	*	New Jersey	44	14	*
<u>Connecticut</u>	58	3	5.2	New Mexico	7	2	*
Delaware	3	-	-	<u>New York</u>	133	16	12.0
Dist. of Col.	1	-	-	North Carolina	13	1	*
<u>Florida</u>	208	35	16.8	North Dakota	5	2	*
Georgia	19	5	*	<u>Ohio</u>	55	6	10.9
Guam	5	2	*	Oklahoma	13	3	*
Hawaii	7	1	*	Oregon	14	5	*
Idaho	11	1	*	<u>Pennsylvania</u>	87	13	14.9
<u>Illinois</u>	49	5	10.2	Rhode Island	8	4	*
Indiana	28	5	*	South Carolina	6	1	*
Iowa	20	2	*	South Dakota	14	1	*
Kansas	11	1	*	Tennessee	30	2	*
Kentucky	11	6	*	<u>Texas</u>	138	24	17.4
Louisiana	9	2	*	Utah	4	-	-
Maine	16	3	*	Vermont	4	-	-
Maryland	24	5	*	Virginia	30	5	*
Massachusetts	24	7	*	<u>Washington</u>	61	7	11.4
<u>Michigan</u>	72	19	26.4	West Virginia	12	4	*
Minnesota	16	4	*	Wisconsin	11	1	*
Mississippi	10	1	*	Wyoming	5	-	-

<sup>a</sup>Base: All eligible respondents who requested an absentee ballot.

<sup>b</sup>Only ten states (those underlined) had enough cases to allow reliable percentages. For the other states an asterisk (\*) appears in the percentage column.

## LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE ELECTION

Every election year much is made of voter apathy, and indeed it is a problem in a democratic society for the reason stated in the introduction to this chapter. In 1978, 54 percent of the qualified voters in this country stayed away from the polls. And, as was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a much larger percentage of those eligible to vote by the absentee process failed to cast ballots.

On the questionnaire, survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of interest in the 1978 general election. The tabulation of their responses is presented in the following table.

Table 3.24  
Level of Interest In The 1978 General Election Reported  
By Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

	<u>Army</u> (N=3457)	<u>Navy</u> (N=2387)	<u>Marine</u> <u>Corps</u> (N=857)	<u>Air</u> <u>Force</u> (N=2587)	<u>Coast</u> <u>Guard</u> (N=169)	<u>Total</u> <u>Military</u> (N=9458)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=957)
Very Interested	32.5	28.8	31.2	31.5	26.7	31.1	46.0
Somewhat Interested	54.2	54.2	52.9	56.5	55.4	54.7	48.0
Not Interested	13.3	17.0	15.9	12.0	17.9	14.2	6.1

<sup>a</sup> Base: All Eligible Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).



By their own report, 14.2 percent of the military respondents and 6.1 percent of the civilian respondents had no interest in the election. About a third of the military respondents (31.1%) and nearly half of the civilian respondents (46.0%) claimed to be very interested. The remainder in each group fell into the limbo of ambivalence that probably accounts for the high level of apathy among the American electorate.

Though the proportion of civilians who professed great interest in the election was half again as great as that for the military service-members, as has already been shown, both groups voted at about the same rate. Furthermore, in each group only a fraction of those who said they were very interested in the election actually voted (this will be illustrated later in this section).

As previous tables have demonstrated, age is quite clearly related to voting, so one would expect a relationship between age and interest in the election. The following tables show this to be the case.

Table 3.25  
Level of Interest in the 1978 General Election  
By Age Group: Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

	18-20 (N=2309)	21-24 (N=2637)	25-34 (N=2813)	35-44 (N=1216)	45-64 (N=166)
Very Interested	21.4	23.8	35.9	48.0	62.3
Somewhat Interested	60.5	59.4	51.8	44.0	33.2
Not Interested	18.1	16.9	12.3	8.0	4.5

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Military Respondents.

Table 3.26  
Level of Interest in the 1978 General Election  
By Age Group: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

	<u>18-20</u> (N=15)	<u>21-24</u> (N=50)	<u>25-34</u> (N=272)	<u>35-44</u> (N=254)	<u>45-64</u> (N=281)
Very Interested	13.3	14.0	38.6	44.9	60.1
Somewhat Interested	60.0	76.0	52.9	51.2	36.3
Not Interested	26.7	10.0	8.5	3.9	3.6

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Civilian Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

For both respondent groups, there is a distinct, positive relationship between age and interest in the election. Three times as many of the 45 to 64 year old military respondents indicated a great interest in the election as did the 18 to 20 year old servicemembers (62.3% vs. 21.4%). For the civilian respondents the ratio for the same two age groups was more than four to one.

Table 3.27  
Level of Interest in the 1978 General Election  
By Officer vs. Enlisted Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

	<u>Officer</u> (N=1289)	<u>Enlisted</u> (N=8168)
Very Interested	46.2	28.7
Somewhat Interested	47.1	55.9
Not Interested	6.7	15.4

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Military Respondents.

An analysis of interest by officer versus enlisted military service-members reveals that a much greater proportion of the officers were very interested in the 1978 election. When the analysis was run with age held constant, officers in every age group were more likely than enlisted respondents of the same age to report great interest in the election.

To see how interest translates into action, the voting actions taken by respondents were cross-tabulated with reported interest in the 1978 election. The results are presented in Tables 3.28 and 3.29.

Table 3.28  
Voting Action by Level of Interest: Military Respondents\*  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

	<u>Very Interested</u> (N=2898)	<u>Somewhat Interested</u> (N=5120)	<u>Not Interested</u> (N=1337)
Didn't Request Ballot	61.2	87.6	96.5
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	7.6	3.5	1.6
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	1.2	0.7	0.7
Voted Absentee	15.5	5.6	1.0
Voted At Polls	14.5	2.5	0.3

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\* Base: Eligible Military Respondents



Table 3.29  
Voting Action by Level of Interest: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

	<u>Very Interested</u> (N=429)	<u>Somewhat Interested</u> (N=455)	<u>Not Interested</u> (N=55)
Didn't Request Ballot	71.6	88.6	93.0
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	6.1	3.1	--
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	1.4	1.8	3.5
Voted Absentee	17.0	4.8	1.8
Voted At Polls	4.0	1.8	1.8

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Civilian Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2)

As far as the proportion of people in the three interest categories who voted is concerned, these two tables hold no surprises. For military and civilian respondents, those who were very interested in the election were very much more likely to have voted than those who indicated a lower degree of interest. Yet, what is surprising is the fact that so many of those who claimed great interest in the election failed to even request a ballot (61.2% for military respondents and 71.6% for civilian respondents). It is hard to reconcile this discrepancy, though one plausible explanation would be that a lack of familiarity with absentee voting procedures served as an inhibiting factor. Also, it is possible that some of these "interested" non-voters did not have access to or were not aware of sources of voting assistance.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Earlier in this chapter the discussion on reasons for not voting touched upon the fact that many respondents didn't vote because they felt they were not sufficiently informed about the candidates and issues. Understandably, this is a problem when one is located outside the country or even outside one's home state. Nevertheless, several sources of information on the election and on absentee voting procedures in general are available to these individuals.

In Question 16 on the survey form (see Appendix A), respondents were given a list of information sources and asked to indicate how useful each had been for them. The results for each survey component are displayed in Table 3.30 on the following page.

The military and civilian respondents alike favored the civilian news media (newspapers, magazines, radio, and television) as useful sources of election and voting information (86.3% and 71.9%, respectively). Stars and Stripes and American Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) were the second and third most frequently cited source of information among civilians (62.5% and 60.4%, respectively). Among the military respondents the second most useful source was the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Federal Times (66.3%), and the third most useful source was, as for the civilian respondents, AFRTS (54.5%).

Some respondents (7.6% of the military respondents and 9.6% of the civilian respondents) wrote in sources of information that had been useful for them but were not included in the list. The military servicemembers most frequently listed political fliers and information from official

Table 3.30  
Useful Sources of Election/Voting Information<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Sources of Information</u>	<u>Army</u> (N=3268)	<u>Navy</u> (N=2141)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=787)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=2407)	<u>Coast Guard</u> (N=153)	<u>Total Military</u> (N=8746)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=790)
Stars and Stripes <sup>c</sup>	64.6	52.9	55.7	44.3	25.6	54.7	62.5
Army/Navy/Air Force/Federal Times	69.0	68.4	64.1	61.4	64.5	66.3	34.6
Base/Unit Newspapers	42.5	40.2	42.6	48.4	20.6	43.3	24.6
American Forces Radio-TV	64.8	50.7	55.0	45.1	31.0	54.5	60.4
Civilian News Media	82.0	89.8	88.5	88.0	92.6	86.3	71.9
Armed Forces Voting Posters	47.9	38.4	39.1	40.8	28.4	42.5	24.1
Military Magazines	53.2	47.6	43.2	43.3	31.6	47.9	21.9
Other Sources	8.5	8.2	7.6	5.5	7.8	7.6	9.6

<sup>a</sup> Base: All Eligible Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Percentages for each source represent the proportion of those who answered the question who indicated that it was quite useful or very useful as a source of election or voting information.



publications from their home states. Other sources frequently listed by this group include friends and family members, publications from political action organizations, voting officers, and various service publications. The useful sources of information listed by civilian respondents included friends and family members, embassy/State Department information, information from candidates, and the news media of the host country.

The useful sources of information varied a bit depending on the respondent's age, as Tables 3.31 and 3.32 show.

Table 3.31  
Useful Sources of Election/Voting Information By  
Age Group: Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

Sources of Information	18-20 (N=2070)	21-24 (N=2386)	25-34 (N=2660)	35-44 (N=1173)	45-64 (N=162)
Stars and Stripes <sup>b</sup>	60.6	57.0	51.7	46.6	38.1
Army/Navy/Air Force/Federal Times	68.9	64.5	67.1	65.8	60.2
Base/Unit Newspapers	52.3	41.9	37.6	43.8	40.7
American Forces Radio-TV	64.2	57.8	49.1	41.9	36.3
Civilian News Media	88.2	85.1	84.4	88.6	94.6
Armed Forces Voting Posters	42.6	37.7	42.3	48.9	51.7
Military Magazines	52.7	46.3	45.1	47.0	38.3
Other Sources	7.0	7.9	7.8	7.4	4.6

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Military Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Percentages for each source represent the proportion of those who answered the question who indicated that it was quite useful or very useful as a source of election or voting information.

Table 3.32  
Useful Sources of Election/Voting Information By  
Age Group: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Sources of Information	18-20 (N=14)	21-24 (N=44)	25-34 (N=249)	35-44 (N=223)	45-64 (N=260)
Stars and Stripes <sup>c</sup>	57.1	77.3	69.9	61.0	54.6
Army/Navy/Air Force/Federal Times	57.1	52.3	36.1	28.7	33.8
Base/Unit Newspapers	64.3	29.5	25.3	20.2	24.6
American Forces Radio-TV	78.6	77.3	66.3	56.1	54.6
Civilian News Media	92.9	56.8	67.1	75.8	74.6
Armed Forces Voting Posters	57.1	29.5	30.5	19.7	18.8
Military Magazines	78.6	38.6	22.9	17.0	19.2
Other Sources	--	4.5	8.8	11.2	10.4

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Civilian Respondents

<sup>b</sup> Civilian Sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Percentages for each source represent the proportion of those who answered the question who indicated that it was quite useful or very useful as a source of election or voting information.

Among the military respondents, those in the younger age groups mentioned Stars and Stripes and AFRTS with much greater frequency than the older respondents, whereas the latter were somewhat more likely to mention the civilian news media and armed forces voting posters. The younger civilian respondents were inclined to mention all sources with greater frequency than their older

counterparts (a trend that was evident among the military respondents also, but to a lesser degree). However, the differences between the younger and older respondents were greatest for military magazines, base/unit newspapers, and armed forces voting posters.

Table 3.33  
Useful Sources of Election/Voting Information by  
Officer vs. Enlisted Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

<u>Sources of Information</u>	<u>Officer</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>
Stars and Stripes <sup>b</sup>	39.6	57.1
Army/Navy/Air Force/ Federal Times	67.1	66.2
Base/Unit Newspapers	40.5	43.7
American Forces Radio-TV	38.2	57.1
Civilian News Media	88.5	86.0
Armed Forces Voting Posters	43.2	42.4
Military Magazines	43.2	48.6
Other Sources	7.0	7.6

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Military Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages for each source represent the proportion of those who answered the question who indicated that it was quite useful or very useful as a source of election or voting information.

The differences between officers and enlisted military respondents were slight. Enlisted servicemembers, though, were more likely to report that Stars and Stripes and AFRTS were useful sources of information.



As data presented earlier in this chapter showed, the Federal Post Card Application Form was the primary means used by the survey respondents to request absentee ballots. The table below shows where they got their FPCAs.

Table 3.34  
Source of Federal Post Card Application Form<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Source Of FPCA	Army (N=910)	Navy (N=486)	Marine Corps (N=216)	Air Force (N=779)	Coast Guard (N=46)	Total Military (N=2437)	Civilian (N=202)
Employer Or Military Channels	93.2	85.2	92.6	92.0	89.1	91.0	63.4
Embassy Or Consulate	1.0	--	0.9	0.2	--	0.5	25.7
Other Source	5.8	14.8	6.5	7.7	10.9	8.4	10.9

<sup>a</sup> Base: All eligible respondents who received a Federal Post Card Application Form (FPCA).

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

Whereas nearly all (91.0%) of the military respondents who obtained FPCAs got them through military channels, fewer than two-thirds (63.4%) of the civilians got their forms through their employers. A quarter (25.7%) of the civilian respondents got their FPCAs from the American embassy or consulate, compared to less than one percent (0.5%) of the military respondents. The remainder in each group got their FPCAs from some other source, the most common being state officials and family members.

To vote by the absentee process an individual must know the various requirements of his home state and he must know when and where to send his ballot request and, of course, his ballot. The procedure varies a great deal from state to state, so it is not possible to develop a uniform set of absentee voting instructions. Depending on the state, the process can be complex, confusing, and often bewildering. The small percentage of eligible persons who cast absentee ballots is a sad testimony to this fact. Having someone to turn to who can help sort out the details of absentee voting in a particular state is, for many, the only thing that enables them to vote.

The survey respondents who sought and received help in voting in the 1978 elections were asked to indicate their sources of assistance. Table 3.35 gives the results.

Table 3.35

Sources of Voting Assistance Used by Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Sources Of Voting Assistance <sup>c</sup>	<u>Army</u> (N=586)	<u>Navy</u> (N=349)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=175)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=601)	<u>Coast Guard</u> (N=22)	<u>Total Military</u> (N=1732)	<u>Civilian</u> (N=84)
Military Voting Officer	69.8	53.7	70.7	82.3	61.5	70.9	35.7
Federal Agency	2.4	1.6	7.8	0.8	2.1	2.2	3.6
Embassy Or Consulate	1.5	0.1	0.9	0.1	1.2	0.6	23.8
Other	27.5	45.2	23.2	18.5	37.7	27.6	38.1

<sup>a</sup> Base: All eligible respondents who indicated at least one source of voting assistance.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate all sources they used, therefore the columns will not always add up to 100 percent.

First, it should be noted that only 61.3 percent of the military respondents and 44.6 percent of the civilian respondents who said they needed assistance actually received it. Of the military servicemembers who did receive assistance, nearly three-quarters (70.9%) indicated that the source of help was a military voting officer. Most of the remainder of the military respondents who got help (27.6%) wrote in a source not printed on the questionnaire. State and local officials and family members and friends were the sources of assistance most frequently listed by this group under the "other" category.

Surprisingly, a substantial percentage of the civilian respondents (35.7%) indicated that they received assistance from a military unit voting officer. However, a sizeable percentage (23.8%) also got help from the U.S. embassy or consulate. Over one-third of the civilians (38.1%) wrote in other sources of assistance, the most common being the same sources mentioned by the military respondents--state officials and family members and friends.

A cross-tabulation of sources of assistance with age shows differences between military and civilian responses (see Tables 3.36 and 3.37 on the following page).

Reliance on the military voting officer as a source of assistance increases with age for the military respondents. Correspondingly, reliance on other sources of assistance decreases with age. Among the civilians just the reverse is true. However, in this particular analysis the number of cases in each cell for the civilian sample is so small that one cannot place much confidence on the percentages.



Table 3.36

Sources of Voting Assistance By Age Group: Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

Sources of Voting Assistance <sup>b</sup>	18-20 (N=336)	21-24 (N=439)	25-34 (N=582)	35-44 (N=270)	45-64 (N=31)
Military Voting Officer	55.0	59.5	79.4	83.7	84.1
Federal Agency	2.9	5.5	0.7	--	0.3
Embassy Or Consulate	0.3	2.0	0.1	0.1	--
Other	44.3	34.3	20.5	18.1	17.0

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible military respondents who received voting assistance.

<sup>b</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate all sources they used, therefore the columns will not always add up to 100 percent.

Table 3.37

Sources of Voting Assistance By Age Group: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

Sources of Voting Assistance <sup>c</sup>	18-20 <sup>d</sup> (N=2)	21-24 <sup>d</sup> (N=3)	25-34 (N=30)	35-44 (N=21)	45-64 (N=22)
Military Voting Officer			50.0	33.3	22.7
Federal Agency			--	9.5	4.5
Embassy Or Consulate			16.7	33.3	27.3
Other			36.7	23.8	45.5

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible civilian respondents who received voting assistance.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate all sources they used, therefore the columns will not always add up to 100 percent.

<sup>d</sup> Due to the small number of cases in the first two age categories percentages would not be meaningful, so they are not included in this table.

Table 3.38 shows the differences in sources of assistance reported by officers and enlisted personnel. A larger percentage of the officers received help from military voting officers and a smaller percentage resorted to other sources of assistance. Further analysis showed that this generally held true across age groups.

Table 3.38  
Sources of Voting Assistance By Officer vs. Enlisted  
Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

<u>Sources of Voting Assistance<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>Officer</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>
Military Voting Officer	83.4	68.7
Federal Agency	0.8	2.5
Embassy Or Consulate	0.3	0.7
Other	17.3	29.4

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible military respondents who received voting assistance.

<sup>b</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate all sources they used, therefore the columns will not always add to 100 percent.

When asked to indicate whether or not they were satisfied with the availability of voting procedure information, more than half the respondents in each group--52.7 percent of the military servicemembers and 53.9 percent of the civilians--said they were not. Table 3.39 shows the sources of assistance used by the satisfied and dissatisfied respondents who were able to find help.

Table 3.39  
Sources of Assistance By Satisfaction With Availability  
Of Voting Procedure Information<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Sources Of Voting Assistance<sup>c</sup></u>	<u>Military</u>		<u>Civilian</u>	
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Not Satisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Not Satisfied</u>
Military Voting Officer	82.6	55.8	36.2	34.3
Federal Agency	2.3	2.3	6.4	2.9
Embassy Or Consulate	0.2	1.4	36.2	8.6
Other	16.1	42.3	23.4	54.3

<sup>a</sup> Base: All eligible respondents who received voting assistance.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate all sources they used, therefore the columns will not always add up to 100 percent.

Among the military respondents, those who were satisfied with the availability of information on voting procedures were much more likely to have received help from the military voting officer than were those who were not satisfied (82.6% vs. 55.8%). The dissatisfied servicemembers were more likely to have obtained help from sources not listed on the questionnaire. This suggests that the dissatisfied respondents had to go outside of official channels for voting assistance, perhaps either because no help was available through official sources or because they were not aware of the available sources of information and assistance.

The civilian respondents who reported satisfaction with the availability of voting procedure information were decidedly more likely than those who



were not satisfied to have received help from the embassy or consulate. Those who were dissatisfied were more likely to have received help from sources not listed on the questionnaire. Again, this may indicate either that voting assistance was not available or that these respondents were not aware of its availability.

The final analysis in this chapter is a telling one. The voting actions taken by survey respondents were analyzed by whether or not the respondent needed and received assistance. The outcome appears in Tables 3.40 and 3.41.

Table 3.40  
Voting Action Taken By Whether Voting Assistance Was  
Needed and Received: Military Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Weighted Ns and Percentages)

<u>Voting Action Taken</u>	<u>No Assistance Needed<sup>b</sup> (N=6258)</u>	<u>Assistance Needed But Not Received (N=1093)</u>	<u>Assistance Needed And Received (N=1700)</u>
Didn't Request Ballot	84.1	88.5	62.3
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	2.0	7.2	11.2
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	0.4	0.7	2.8
Voted Absentee	5.8	1.9	20.9
Voted At Polls	7.6	1.6	2.8

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Military Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> These three categories are based on responses to Question 12 (see survey form-Appendix A).

Table 3.41  
Voting Action Taken By Whether Voting Assistance Was  
Needed and Received: Civilian Respondents<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)<sup>b</sup>

<u>Voting Action Taken</u>	<u>No Assistance Needed<sup>c</sup> (N=709)</u>	<u>Assistance Needed But Not Received (N=105)</u>	<u>Assistance Needed And Received (N=85)</u>
Didn't Request Ballot	84.2	84.8	47.1
Requested But Didn't Receive Ballot	2.4	10.5	10.6
Received But Didn't Return Ballot	1.1	1.9	5.9
Voted Absentee	8.7	2.9	36.5
Voted At Polls	3.5	--	--

<sup>a</sup> Base: Eligible Civilian Respondents.

<sup>b</sup> Civilian sample is self-weighting (see discussion in Chapter 2).

<sup>c</sup> These three categories are based on responses to Question 12 (see survey form-Appendix A).

Of the military respondents who said they needed no assistance, 13.4 percent voted in the 1978 election (about the same proportion as for the military sample as a whole). Yet, of those who needed but didn't receive assistance only 3.5 percent voted, and among those who needed and received assistance 23.7 percent voted.

The analysis of the civilian sample produced very similar results. Of those who said they didn't need assistance, 12.2 percent voted in 1978 (about the same proportion as for the civilian sample as a whole). Among the

civilians who needed but didn't receive assistance only 2.9 percent voted, while of those who needed and received help 36.5 percent voted. No words are needed to elaborate on these figures, for no other statistics presented in this report more clearly indicate the need for an effective voting assistance program.



## Chapter 4

### The Survey of Unit Voting Officers

In the past, most efforts to fulfill the biennial requirement for "statistical data relating to absentee voting" mandated in the 1955 Federal Voting Assistance Act were confined to surveys of absentee voters, such as the one discussed in the previous chapter. There is, however, another source of statistical data which may provide an equally important view of the absentee voting process--military unit voting officers and counselors.

Each service has a network of individuals charged with providing assistance to servicemembers in their efforts to register or vote. The number of voting officers varies considerably by service; however, theoretically everyone in the military should have convenient access to a voting officer or counselor.

Since the need for voting assistance is occasional, the duties of voting officer are almost always assigned as additional duties. Nevertheless, the function of the voting officer is an important one. In many instances the accuracy and timeliness of the information he provides will determine whether or not an individual is able to cast his vote. It goes without saying that voting officers should have access to the training, information, and materials they need to discharge adequately their responsibilities.

The data presented in this chapter will provide a good look at the voting officers in the four DoD Services. Their background, their training for their voting officer duties, their requirements, the amount and

kinds of assistance they have provided, the problems they and the voters they assist frequently encounter, and their suggestions for improving the Federal Voting Assistance Program will all be examined. As indicated in Chapter 2, the sampling method used in this survey was non-random, so one cannot make valid extrapolations to the entire population of voting officers. However, the facts, problems, and suggestions drawn from these data are no less real, and they do provide a picture of how the Voting Assistance Program is working at its point of contact with the voters.

#### PROFILE OF UNIT VOTING OFFICERS

There are many similarities among the unit voting officers who responded to the survey, but at the same time there is much diversity, both within service and across the services. For example, as the pay grade distribution presented in Table 4.1 shows, a respectable percentage of voting officers are not even officers, and a few are not even in military service.

Table 4.1  
Voting Officer Pay Grade Distribution By Service  
(Percentages)

<u>Pay Grade</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=267)	<u>Navy</u> (N=227)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=142)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=317)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=953)
E-4 to E-6	0.7	4.0	--	6.6	3.4
E-7 to E-9	1.1	13.2	1.4	12.3	7.8
Warrant Officer	4.9	3.5	6.3	--	3.1
O-1 to O-3	89.9	71.4	88.7	68.8	78.3
O-4 to O-9	1.9	7.5	3.5	10.1	6.2
GS-7 to GS-10	0.7	0.4	--	--	0.3
GS-11 to GS-14	0.7	--	--	2.2	0.9

Among the responses from all the services, 11.2 percent were enlisted personnel in pay grades E-4 through E-9. Most of the enlisted voting "officers" or voting counselors were in the Navy and the Air Force. About one percent of the respondents were Federal civilian employees in grades GS-7 to GS-14, and most of these served as voting officers for Army and Air Force units (most likely administrative units). However, the great majority (78.3%) of the unit voting officers who responded to the survey were junior officers (pay grades O-1 to O-3).

There are voting officers at virtually every echelon of command, so it is not surprising that the survey respondents represent a wide range of unit sizes. For purposes of clarity, the distribution of unit sizes reported by respondents were divided into 10 groups ranging from very small units of 25 or fewer persons to large commands of 2,000 or more. The table below presents the grouped distribution of unit sizes for the total sample and for individual services.

The units represented peak at the level of 100 to 399 individuals. This holds true for all services except the Air Force, which has a greater representation of small units. The data seemed to reflect fairly well the general organization of the respective service components. The Air Force, with its many technical activities, relies more on small units organized around a technical specialty, while the other services are organized in company and ships-crew size units, which would generally fall within the range of 100 to 399 persons.



Table 4.2  
Number of People in Respondent's Unit  
(Percentages)

Number of People in Unit*	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				Total DoD (N=944)
	<u>Army</u> (N=260)	<u>Navy</u> (N=228)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=139)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=317)	
25 or Fewer	0.8	--	--	16.1	5.6
26 to 99	10.8	2.2	3.6	24.0	12.1
100 to 199	25.4	24.6	14.4	15.5	20.2
200 to 399	17.7	33.8	29.5	23.0	25.1
400 to 599	15.4	15.8	10.8	12.3	13.8
600 to 799	13.5	6.1	9.4	3.2	7.6
800 to 999	4.6	2.6	7.9	2.8	4.0
1000 to 1499	5.8	7.0	18.0	2.5	6.8
1500 to 1999	3.1	0.9	3.6	--	1.6
2000 or More	3.1	7.0	2.9	0.6	3.2

\* The median unit size reported by respondents in each service is:  
Army - 300; Navy - 350; Marine Corps - 422; and Air Force - 158.

The next table reveals a great deal about unit voting officers, though what it reveals is largely a matter of interpretation. The questionnaire asked for the percentage of his time the respondent had spent on his voting officer duties since January 1978. The results, once again grouped for clarity, are decidedly skewed toward the lower end of the scale.

Table 4.3  
Percent of 1978 Work Time Spent On Voting Officer Duties  
(Percentages)

% Time Spent on Duties*	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				Total DoD (N=934)
	<u>Army</u> (N=255)	<u>Navy</u> (N=222)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=139)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=318)	
None (0%)	9.0	6.3	4.3	1.3	5.0
1% or Less (>0%)	40.8	42.8	28.1	38.1	38.4
2% to 4%	27.1	21.2	25.9	29.6	26.3
5% to 9%	14.1	23.0	20.1	17.3	18.2
10% to 14%	6.3	6.3	16.5	8.2	8.5
15% to 19%	1.2	0.5	2.9	2.2	1.6
20% to 24%	--	--	2.2	1.9	1.0
25% to 29%	0.8	--	--	0.9	0.5
30% or More	0.8	--	--	0.6	0.4

\* The median percent for each service is: Army - 1.5%; Navy - 1.6%; Marine Corps - 2.4%; and Air Force - 2.1%.

Nearly four out of ten voting officers (38.4%) devoted one percent or less of their time to voting officer duties. This would be a total of about three days for those who had held the voting officer slot since January. It is hard to interpret this piece of datum in the absence of other information. For example, in hindsight it would have been interesting to know how much time the respondents felt they should have devoted to their responsibilities as unit voting officers. It is possible, especially considering the level of interest (or lack of it) in the 1978 elections, that one percent of their time was entirely adequate.

Also, it is possible that this figure reflects, to a great extent, voting officers at higher level commands whose jobs may not involve as much counseling as is required of voting officers at lower levels of command. Of course, there remains the unsettling possibility that many voting officers, because of the demands of their primary duties, are simply not able to devote more time to their voting officer obligations.

On the positive side, another quarter (26.3%) of the respondents reported that they spent two to four percent of their time on voting responsibilities, and nearly one in five (18.2%) spent five to nine percent of their time on this important additional duty. Few respondents spent 10 percent or more of their time on their voting officer duties.

There must be considerable turnover among voting officers, for few of the survey respondents had held that duty for one year or longer. Table 4.4 gives the distribution of time served as voting officer.

Over two-thirds (69.7%) of the respondents had filled the role of voting officer from one to 11 months, and one out of 15 respondents had held the job for one month or less. This would seem to indicate that the duty is often assigned just prior to an election. A break in the continuity of the voting program at the unit level during the period immediately preceeding a general election is certainly not ideal, but continuity is not a characteristic of military life. The turnover among voting officers must, to some extent, be a reflection of the generally high rate of turnover in military assignments.



Table 4.4  
Number of Months Respondent Served As Voting Officer  
(Percentages)

<u>Months Served*</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=265)	<u>Navy</u> (N=229)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=142)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=321)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=957)
1 or Less	9.8	5.7	9.9	2.8	6.5
2-3 Months	12.8	9.2	25.4	7.2	11.9
4-8 Months	29.1	30.1	19.7	23.1	26.1
9-11 Months	25.7	22.7	26.8	25.9	25.2
12-17 Months	15.1	14.4	10.6	22.1	16.6
18-23 Months	4.2	11.4	2.1	6.2	6.3
24-35 Months	1.1	4.8	4.9	10.3	5.6
36 Months or More	2.3	0.9	0.7	2.5	1.8

---

\* The median number of months for each service is: Army - 6.5; Navy - 7.7; Marine Corps - 5.1; and Air Force - 9.7.

Regardless of how new a voting officer is to his duties, if he has been well-trained for the role he should be able to operate an effective program. Yet, few of those who responded to the survey reported having received any training whatsoever for their voting officer duties. Overall, only slightly more than one-third of the respondents reported specific voting officer training. On this item there was considerable variation among the services, with Air Force voting officers reporting training at nearly three-times the rate reported by those in the Navy (54.7% for the Air Force vs. 19.4% for the Navy). The percentage of Army and Marine Corps voting officers who reported some training fell in between, at 33.2 percent and 34.3 percent, respectively.

The respondents also reported the nature of the training they had received. The results, displayed below, are not encouraging.

Table 4.5  
Type of Training Received by Unit Voting Officers  
Who Reported Some Form of Training  
(Percentages)

<u>Type of Training</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICES</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=94)*	<u>Navy</u> (N=46)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=53)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=199)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=392)
Informal Briefing	86.2	91.3	90.6	82.4	85.5
Classroom Instruction	9.6	4.3	5.7	9.5	8.4
Training Film	4.3	4.3	3.8	8.0	6.1

\* Ns and Percentages are based on responses. Some respondents indicated more than one type of training.

Less than ten percent (8.4%) of those who reported some form of training actually received classroom instruction, and only six percent reported having seen a training film on the subject of absentee voting (some of whom were among those who reported having received classroom instruction). Most of the voting officers who indicated they had received training for their duties had received no more than an informal briefing (85.5%). This picture is fairly consistent across services.

## ADEQUACY OF INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

Since, if our sample is indicative, very few voting officers receive formal training in their duties, it is all the more important that they have access to the information they need to assist absentee voters. Happily, most survey respondents reported that they did have the information needed to answer voters' questions (80.7%). The percentage who felt that their needs were adequately met varied slightly from service to service. The range was from 74.7 percent for Army respondents to 87.2 percent for Air Force respondents, while 77.0 percent of the Navy respondents and 83.0 percent of the Marine Corps respondents felt that they had all the information they needed.

Though most voting officers may have had all the information they needed, it is significant that one in five did not feel that their information needs had been met. A content analysis of the kinds of information needed but not available to these respondents yielded the following categories:

1. Need any/all information available
2. Need Voting Assistance Guide(s)
3. Need specific guidelines for determining legal residence
4. Need information on voting dates and deadlines
5. Need information on candidates and/or issues
6. Need addresses of local election officials
7. Need more specific information on each state's requirements for absentee voting
8. Need information on primary elections
9. Need voting posters/films/brochures
10. Miscellaneous, not elsewhere classified



Table 4.6 below gives the distribution of persons indicating each information need by service.

Table 4.6  
Information Needed By Voting Officer  
(Percentages)

Information Needed	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=47)*	<u>Navy</u> (N=39)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=9)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=37)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=132)
Any/All Information	34.0	20.5	22.2	13.5	23.5
Voting Asst. Guide	17.0	15.4	33.3	29.7	21.2
Legal Res. Guidelines	--	7.7	--	2.3	3.0
Dates and Deadlines	6.4	7.7	11.1	10.8	8.3
Candidates and Issues	--	5.1	22.2	2.7	3.8
Mailing Addresses	10.6	2.6	--	5.4	6.1
Specific State Info.	23.4	23.1	--	18.9	20.5
Info. on Primary Elec.	--	2.6	--	2.7	1.5
Posters/Films/Pamph.	4.3	2.6	11.1	2.7	3.8
Miscellaneous, NEC	4.3	12.8	--	10.8	8.3

\* Ns and Percentages are based on responses. Some respondents indicated more than one need.

Three categories account for nearly two-thirds of the responses. The first of these is the somewhat bewildered plea for any and all information available, the second most common need was for a copy of the Voting Assistance Guide, and the third most common need was for specific information on the absentee voting requirements and regulations of the various states.

Two items are essential to any absentee voting assistance effort. One is the Voting Assistance Guide, and the other is the Federal Post Card Application (see Appendix C). Every effort is made to distribute these items in sufficient quantities to all military units, but there are occasional kinks in the distribution systems of the services.

The Voting Assistance Guide is the bible of the voting officer. It is produced every two years and contains a synopsis of each state's absentee voting requirements as well as general guidelines on absentee voting procedures. It is unfortunate that a large percentage of the respondents who felt they needed more information did not have even the basic document designed to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Indeed, when asked if they had received the 1978 DoD Voting Assistance Guide, nearly one-fifth (18.9%) of all respondents indicated that they had not. This varied by service from a low of 12.8 percent among Air Force voting officers to a high of 31.6 percent among voting officers in the Army. The figures for the Navy and Marine Corps (14.4 percent and 16.1 percent, respectively) were closer to the Air Force figure.

The survey respondents were also asked to indicate when they received the Guide. The distribution of responses is given in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7  
Month 1978 Voting Assistance Guide Received  
(Percentages)

<u>Month</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=126)	<u>Navy</u> (N=134)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=58)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=194)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=512)
January	5.6	0.7	3.4	1.5	2.5
February	6.3	0.7	3.4	1.0	2.5
March	5.6	3.0	6.9	3.1	4.1
April	7.1	4.5	5.2	5.2	5.5
May	7.1	5.2	12.1	9.8	8.2
June	10.3	6.7	24.1	19.1	14.3
July	11.1	14.9	13.8	21.6	16.4
August	22.2	17.2	17.2	17.5	18.6
September	12.7	26.1	5.2	13.4	15.6
October	10.3	14.9	6.9	5.7	9.4
November	0.8	5.2	1.7	2.1	2.5
December	0.8	0.7	--	--	0.4

Nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of those who answered the question said that the Guide had arrived between the months of June and September. Curiously, over nine percent of the respondents said they received the Guide prior to April, even though the 1978 version wasn't distributed until April at the earliest. It is likely that many of these had received the previous (1976) edition of the Voting Assistance Guide. Three percent of the responding voting officers didn't receive the Guide until November or December, far too late to serve any useful purpose for the 1978 general election.



The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) is a uniquely useful form, for it serves no fewer than eight purposes, depending on the state in which one is trying to vote. It is used:

1. As a registration form
2. As a registration application form
3. As a request for state/local registration form
4. As an application for absentee ballot
5. As a request for a state/local application for absentee ballot
6. As a simultaneous form to complete registration and apply for an absentee ballot
7. As a simultaneous form to request a state/local registration form and a ballot
8. As an application to change political party affiliation.

To make things more complex, some states in some instances require the FPCA to be witnessed or notarized. It is easy to see how this little form (which was actually designed by Congress) can generate a great deal of confusion for voting officers as well as for the absentee voters themselves. Nevertheless, its use is essential to the process of absentee voting, so it must be made available to all who need it.

When queried as to the availability of FPCAs in their units, most of the voting officers in our sample (87.8%) said that sufficient quantities were on hand. Yet, over 12 percent--nearly one in eight--did not have ample quantities of the form available. Given the importance of the FPCA, 12 percent is a disturbingly high proportion. Once again, there were noteworthy differences among the four services. The Air Force and Marine Corps had the lowest rates of voting officers reporting inadequate supplies of the FPCAs--4.4 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively. The Navy had

the worst showing with a quarter (24.7%) of their responding voting officers saying that they lacked the forms. Among Army Voting Officers, 14.4 percent were without FPCAs. The formidable distribution problems the Navy faces on a daily basis (alluded to in Chapter 2) are undoubtedly behind the shortage of FPCAs in that service.

#### AMOUNT AND KINDS OF ASSISTANCE REQUESTED

To gauge the demand for their services, the voting officers were asked to indicate on the survey the approximate number of people they had assisted during the election year. The question was meant to elicit the number of people the respondent had personally counseled; however, judging from the responses (which ranged from zero to well over a thousand), some respondents must have included the number of people they had addressed during group briefings.

The following table gives the distribution of responses by service.

Table 4.8  
Number of Persons Counseled By Voting Officer in 1978  
(Percentages)

<u>Number Counseled*</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				<u>Total DoD (N=898)</u>
	<u>Army (N=244)</u>	<u>Navy (N=216)</u>	<u>Marine Corps (N=134)</u>	<u>Air Force (N=304)</u>	
None	16.8	9.3	11.9	7.2	11.0
1-9	27.0	23.6	22.4	30.9	26.8
10-24	27.9	28.2	32.1	26.0	28.0
25-49	15.6	19.0	14.9	16.8	16.7
50-74	5.7	6.0	8.2	8.6	7.1
75-99	2.5	1.4	3.7	2.3	2.3
100-149	2.0	2.8	4.5	5.3	3.7
150-199	0.8	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.3
200 Or More	1.6	7.9	0.7	1.6	3.0

\* The median number counseled for each service is: Army - 10; Navy - 15; Marine Corps - 14; and Air Force - 15.

Nearly three-fourths (71.5%) of the voting officers reported that they had counseled between one and 49 persons. It is interesting that 11 percent of the respondents had counseled no one, but recall that nearly seven percent of the voting officers had held that position for one month or less (see Table 4.4) at the time they completed the questionnaire. The three percent who indicated that they had counseled 200 or more individuals are almost certainly including group briefings.

The kinds of assistance most often requested fell into fairly predictable patterns. A content analysis of the responses produced the following categories:



1. Election dates; wanted information on deadlines for submitting FPCAs and/or ballots
2. Ballot request form (Federal Post Card Application)
3. Help in filling out the FPCA
4. General information on absentee voting procedure; for example, how/when/where to get ballots, etc.
5. Names and addresses of state election/voter registration officials; wanted to know where to mail ballot and/or FPCA
6. Information on eligibility and/or residency requirements
7. Needed to have FPCA or ballot witnessed/notarized/certified
8. Information on candidates and issues
9. Assistance in filling out ballot
10. Information on absentee voting by dependents
11. Information on how to change state of legal residence
12. Information on absentee registration
13. Information on primary elections
14. Information on which elections were being held
15. Help in determining county of residence or voting precinct
16. Information on whether tax liability incurred by voting
17. Assurance that absentee ballot would be counted
18. Miscellaneous, not elsewhere classified

Table 4.9, on the next page, shows the number of responses in each category.

The kinds of information or assistance most frequently requested were (in order of decreasing frequency): election dates and deadlines, names and addresses of election officials, FPCA forms, information on absentee registration, and general information on absentee voting procedures. Together, these requests accounted for over two-thirds (68.8%) of the assistance requests mentioned by the respondents.

Table 4.9  
Information or Assistance Most Often Requested  
From Voting Officers<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)

Information/Assistance Requested	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=462) <sup>b</sup>	<u>Navy</u> (N=486)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=263)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=691)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=1902)
Dates & Deadlines	19.3	14.6	17.9	20.7	18.4
Needed FPCA	12.1	11.7	12.9	9.7	11.3
Help With FPCA	8.0	6.8	9.5	7.8	7.8
Gen.Procedure Info.	8.0	12.8	12.9	8.4	10.0
Mailing Addresses	19.3	15.0	15.6	20.0	17.9
Elig/Residency Req.	7.8	7.8	4.6	6.4	6.8
Notarize Forms	6.1	4.5	3.4	6.4	5.4
Candidates & Issues	4.1	3.9	3.8	2.6	3.5
Help With Ballot	0.9	1.4	2.3	0.4	1.1
Dependent Voting Info.	0.9	2.3	1.9	3.0	2.2
Changing Legal Resid.	--	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
Info. on Registration	8.7	13.8	10.6	11.3	11.2
Info. on Primary Elec.	0.2	1.6	0.4	0.7	0.8
Which Elec. Coming Up?	2.2	1.6	2.7	1.3	1.8
Det. County of Resid.	0.9	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.4
Tax Liability Info.	0.2	0.2	--	--	0.1
Will Bal. be Counted?	0.2	0.2	0.4	--	0.2
Miscellaneous, NEC	1.3	1.0	0.4	0.9	0.9

<sup>a</sup> Based on a content analysis of responses to Question 11 (See Appendix A).

<sup>b</sup> Ns and Percentages are based on responses. Each respondent was allowed to indicate up to three common types of assistance/information request.

## PROBLEMS REPORTED BY VOTERS AND VOTING OFFICERS

The purpose of the Federal Voting Assistance Program is to reduce the hurdles absentee voters have to clamber over in order to execute the rather straightforward process of casting a ballot. To determine the kinds of obstacles absentee voters faced in the 1978 general election, the voting officers were asked to indicate the most frequent complaints they received related to absentee registration and voting. It is clear from their responses that many of the voting officers answered the question from their own perspective rather than that of the voters. However, such responses helped provide a more complete picture of the problems related to absentee voting. The responses were analyzed and sorted into the following 19 categories:

1. Ballot either not received or not received in time to vote
2. The absentee voting procedure takes too long; people wait too long to initiate the process
3. Servicemembers need more information on candidates and issues
4. Don't have enough specific information; for example, requirements that differ from state to state
5. Absentee voting procedures (including ballots and other forms) are confusing and unclear
6. FPCAs were unavailable or not available in sufficient quantities
7. Voting Assistance Guide was late, not available at all, or not available in sufficient quantities
8. Difficulty in determining legal residence
9. Problems with or confusion over primary elections
10. Deadlines established by states are too restrictive
11. Problems relating to absentee registration
12. Problems in getting information from states
13. Didn't know who to go to for help; didn't know who voting officer was



14. Servicemembers' lack of knowledge about absentee voting
15. Fear of incurring tax liability
16. Didn't know county/district/precinct, etc.
17. Slow mail, Postal Service delays
18. Communication problems experienced by Naval units at sea
19. Miscellaneous, not elsewhere classified

Table 4.10 gives the distribution of responses among the 19 categories for each service.

There can be no question as to the major source of difficulty. Nearly one-quarter of the responses (24%) fell into the first category--the ballot either was not received or was not received in time to allow the individual to vote. This accords with the findings discussed in the last chapter. The second most common response (12.7%) was that the absentee voting procedure takes too long, and its corollary--people wait too long to initiate the process. Unfortunately, even the most responsive voting assistance program will face problems over which it has little control. State and local laws and regulations dictate the absentee voting procedures, not Federal law. There is little the Federal Voting Assistance Program can do to simplify the process or to assure those who wish to vote that they will receive a ballot. But it can strive to better inform absentee voters about procedures and deadlines.

Four of the common difficulties mentioned by the respondents are definitely within the purview of the Federal Voting Assistance Program: FPCAs not available, Voting Assistance Guide not available, servicemember didn't know who to go to for help, and servicemembers' general lack of knowledge about absentee voting. These four problems, which constituted over 12 percent of the responses, indicate areas that need more attention.

Table 4.10  
Common Problems Associated With Absentee Voting<sup>a</sup>  
(Percentages)

<u>Problem Encountered</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=132) <sup>b</sup>	<u>Navy</u> (N=146)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=92)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=189)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=559)
Ballot Not Received	25.0	23.3	26.1	22.8	24.0
Takes Too Long	9.8	13.0	7.6	16.9	12.7
No Candidate/ Issues Info.	7.6	6.2	12.0	12.7	9.7
Lacked Specific Info	10.6	6.2	5.4	2.1	5.7
Confusing Procedures	6.8	6.2	7.6	9.0	7.5
FPCAs Not Available	7.6	6.8	4.3	1.1	4.7
VAG Not Available	2.3	4.8	1.1	1.6	2.5
Det. Legal Residence	4.5	3.4	--	2.6	2.9
Primary Elect. Problems	0.8	1.4	--	1.1	0.9
State Deadlines	1.5	1.4	2.2	3.2	2.1
Registration Probs.	8.3	8.2	7.6	6.9	7.7
Getting State Info.	1.5	4.8	3.3	6.3	4.3
Where To Go For Help	2.3	0.7	1.1	0.5	1.1
SM Lack of Knowledge	3.0	2.7	9.8	2.6	3.9
Tax Liability Fear	0.8	--	--	0.5	0.4
Didn't Know County	1.5	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.1
Slow Mail	--	--	2.2	1.1	0.7
Deployed Naval Unit	--	2.7	2.2	--	1.1
Miscellaneous, NEC	6.1	7.5	6.5	7.9	7.2

<sup>a</sup> Based on a content analysis of responses to Question 12 (See Appendix A).

<sup>b</sup> Ns and Percentages are based on responses. Each respondent was allowed to list up to three common complaints.

The third most common problem, indicated by about one out of ten respondents (9.7%), was the lack of information on the candidates and issues. This is a rather thorny problem in that it would be virtually impossible to keep absentee voters abreast of all the state and local candidates and issues. Furthermore, the image of the Federal government distributing campaign literature, no matter how objectively it might be written, is an unlikely and uncomfortable one. Obtaining information on election issues and candidates is a responsibility that probably should remain with the voter. However, voting officers can provide assistance in locating sources of information.

In order to see if any states stand out as being particularly troublesome for absentee voters, the survey respondents were asked to list the states that they felt presented the greatest problems. The results of this poll, displayed in the following table, do show definite patterns or "hot spots."



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HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH ORGANIZATION ALEXANDRIA VA  
ABSENTEE VOTING AMONG MILITARY PERSONNEL AND FEDERAL CIVILIAN E--ETC(U)  
MAY 79 J A RICHARDS  
HUMRRO-FR-ED-79-2

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Table 4.11  
States Mentioned by Voting Officers as Causing Problems  
For Absentee Voters\*

<u>State or Territory</u>	<u>Times Mentioned</u>	<u>% Of Total</u>	<u>State or Territory</u>	<u>Times Mentioned</u>	<u>% Of Total</u>
Alabama	11	2.9	Nebraska	1	0.3
Alaska	7	1.8	Nevada	2	0.5
Arizona	4	1.1	New Hampshire	4	1.1
Arkansas	4	1.1	New Jersey	7	1.8
California	63	16.6	New Mexico	1	0.3
Colorado	2	0.5	New York	41	10.8
Connecticut	4	1.1	North Carolina	5	1.3
Delaware	1	0.3	North Dakota	1	0.3
Dist. of Columbia	5	1.3	Ohio	10	2.6
Florida	36	9.5	Oklahoma	2	0.5
Georgia	6	1.6	Oregon	4	1.1
Hawaii	7	1.8	Pennsylvania	5	1.3
Idaho	1	0.3	Puerto Rico	1	0.3
Illinois	10	2.6	Rhode Island	2	0.5
Indiana	4	1.1	South Carolina	3	0.8
Iowa	2	0.5	South Dakota	1	0.3
Kansas	4	1.1	Tennessee	4	1.1
Kentucky	2	0.5	Texas	39	10.3
Louisiana	7	1.8	Utah	5	1.3
Maine	2	0.5	Vermont	3	0.8
Maryland	5	1.3	Virginia	8	2.1
Massachusetts	14	3.7	Washington	2	0.5
Michigan	8	2.1	West Virginia	4	1.1
Minnesota	2	0.5	Wisconsin	2	0.5
Mississippi	8	2.1	Wyoming	1	0.3
Missouri	3	0.8			

\* Based on 380 responses from voting officers from all four services.  
Each respondent was allowed to list up to three states.

Note that only three states and territories escaped mention (Montana, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), so the fact that a state was mentioned should certainly not be taken as an indictment of its responsiveness to absentee voters. Of the 51 states mentioned, 35 were mentioned by five or fewer voting officers.

California has the dubious distinction of leading the list of problem states, garnering one out of six responses (16.6%). California is followed by New York (10.8%), Texas (10.3%), and Florida (9.5%). Together, these four states accounted for nearly half the responses. In fairness, it should be noted that, as the data in the last chapter indicate, these states are quite popular among absentee voters. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that two of these (Texas and Florida) have no state income tax, and the other two (New York and California) exempt military personnel assigned outside the state from paying state income taxes. Furthermore, with the exception of Florida, they are among the most populous states in the country. Therefore, it is possible that some ballots were not sent due to the sheer volume of requests these states must handle (which is really not a good excuse), and some probably because the requester did not meet state eligibility requirements. Also, as with all states, requests for absentee ballots that are mailed either too early or too late will often simply be ignored.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PROGRAM

From the results discussed thus far, especially in the last section, one can pretty well predict the suggestions for improving the Federal



Voting Assistance Program. Most stem directly from the common problems encountered by the voters and the voting officers. The categories derived from the content analysis are:

1. Voting Assistance Guides should be distributed in a more timely manner
2. Servicemembers should have more information on candidates and issues
3. Unit voting officers need more specific information than that contained in the Voting Assistance Guide
4. Insure that all units have an adequate supply of FPCAs well in advance of election deadlines (including primary elections)
5. Voting Assistance Guide should be distributed more widely
6. Provide more training for unit voting officers
7. Voting Assistance Guide should be redesigned; needs to be better organized, more complete, etc.
8. Try to get states to standardize and simplify their absentee voting requirements
9. Publish specific guidelines for determining state of legal residence
10. Get states to act more promptly in sending absentee ballots
11. Make sure each servicemember has an opportunity to vote, including Navy personnel at sea
12. Do more to encourage servicemembers to vote
13. Do more to inform servicemembers about absentee voting procedures and elections well in advance of election deadlines
14. Eliminate the Voting Assistance Program
15. Emphasize/upgrade the Voting Assistance Program
16. Miscellaneous, not elsewhere classified

Though some suggested that the best way to improve the program would be to simply eliminate it, as the following table shows, their numbers were small.

Table 4.12  
 Suggestions For Improving The Federal Voting Assistance Program<sup>a</sup>  
 (Percentages)

<u>Suggestion</u>	<u>MILITARY SERVICE</u>				
	<u>Army</u> (N=129) <sup>b</sup>	<u>Navy</u> (N=141)	<u>Marine Corps</u> (N=59)	<u>Air Force</u> (N=140)	<u>Total DoD</u> (N=460)
Distrib. VAG Earlier	10.8	29.1	6.8	26.4	20.7
Need Cand./ Issue Info.	2.4	4.3	18.6	7.9	6.7
UVOs Need More Info.	15.0	11.3	13.6	6.4	11.1
Improve FPCA Distrib.	9.2	20.6	1.7	4.3	10.2
Wider Distrib. of VAG	7.5	2.1	--	--	2.6
Training for UVOs	16.7	9.2	6.8	9.3	10.9
Redesign VAG	4.2	4.3	3.4	5.0	4.3
Standardize Requirements	0.8	1.4	6.8	5.7	3.3
Legal Res. Guidelines	--	0.7	1.7	0.7	0.7
Quick State Response	--	--	--	3.6	1.1
Ensure Oppor. to Vote	--	2.1	--	--	0.7
Encourage SM To Vote	4.2	2.1	5.1	7.1	4.6
Inform SM Earlier	18.3	6.4	23.7	11.4	13.3
Eliminate the Program	0.8	0.7	1.7	--	0.7
Upgrade the Program	2.5	0.7	1.7	1.4	1.5
Miscellaneous, NEC	7.5	5.0	8.5	10.7	7.8

<sup>a</sup> Based on a content analysis of question 15 (See Appendix A).

<sup>b</sup> Ns and Percentages based on responses. Some respondents gave more than one suggestion.



Five suggestions, led by a request that the Voting Assistance Guide be distributed in a more timely manner, comprised the majority (66.2%) of responses. In order of decreasing frequency, the other frequently mentioned suggestions were: to do more to inform servicemembers about absentee voting procedures in advance of elections, to provide voting officers more information than contained in the Voting Assistance Guide, to provide more training for voting officers, and to improve the distribution of FPCAs. In general, the voting officers felt that they could execute their responsibilities more effectively if they had more information, training, and materials, and if they were to receive them in a more timely manner.



**APPENDIX A**

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES AND COVER LETTERS**

1. 1978 Post-Election Voting Survey (Form A)
2. Survey of Unit Voting Officers



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

November 8, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL SELECTED MILITARY PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: 1978 Federal Voting Assistance Survey

You have been selected at random to participate in a survey required by the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955. It does not make any difference if you voted or did not vote in the recent election.

The Federal Voting Assistance Act requires that a report on absentee voting be submitted to the President and the Congress after each general election. Your help is needed to complete the survey.

The attached questionnaire is anonymous--you need not place your name or any other identifying information on the answer sheet.

Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire now. Return it in the pre-addressed, postage paid envelope.

Thank you for your assistance.

Attachment

*Henry Valentino*  
Henry Valentino  
Director, Federal Voting  
Assistance Program



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

November 8, 1978

Dear Federal Employee:

You have been selected at random to participate in a survey required by the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955. It does not make any difference if you voted or did not vote in the recent election.

The Federal Voting Assistance Act requires that a report on absentee voting be submitted to the President and the Congress after each general election. Your help is needed to complete the survey.

The attached questionnaire is anonymous--you need not place your name or any other identifying information on the answer sheet.

Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire now. Return it in the pre-addressed, postage paid envelope.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

*Henry Valentino*  
Henry Valentino  
Director, Federal Voting  
Assistance Program

Attachment



## 1978 POST-ELECTION VOTING SURVEY

The Federal Voting Assistance Act requires that the President and the Congress of the United States be given a report following each general election dealing with the voting experiences of those individuals covered by the Act. Part of the next report is to be based on the findings from this sample survey. You have been selected at random to represent your Service/Agency. Your timely response to this survey will help us to assure that the study truly represents the opinions and experiences of Americans who use the absentee voting process. Thank you in advance for your participation.

**AUTHORITY:** The authority to solicit the information requested in this survey is contained in the Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1733cc-11).

**PURPOSE:** The information obtained is used to evaluate and improve the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

**USES:** The information will be used for research and analysis purposes only. No individual identifying data will be retained after completion and return of the survey. This survey is being conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization for the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

**EFFECTS OF NON-DISCLOSURE:** Participation in the survey is voluntary. No penalty will be imposed for failure to respond to any particular question.

### DO NOT MARK IN THIS SPACE

0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9
1	2	3	4	5

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARKING

Your responses will be read by an optical mark reader. Please observe the following rules to assure that your answers will be correctly read.

- Use only a soft lead pencil (a standard No. 2 pencil is ideal).
- Make heavy marks that fill the circle.
- Erase cleanly any answer you wish to change.
- Make no stray markings of any kind.
- Where write-in responses are necessary, please confine your writing to the limits of the lines provided.
- Where numbers are called for in an answer, as in questions 1, 10, and 11, first write your answer in the boxes provided and then fill in the circles underneath which represent the numbers you have placed in the boxes.

#### EXAMPLE A:

How old were you on 7 November 1978?

2	1
0	0
1	0
2	0

Years

#### EXAMPLE B:

Will marks made with ballpoint pen or felt-tip pen be properly read?

☐ Yes    ☒ No

1. How old were you on 7 November 1978?  $\longrightarrow$ 

--	--

 yrs

0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9

- 2. Were you a United States citizen on 7 November 1978?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No

- 3. If on active duty in the Armed Forces/Uniformed Services, what is your Service? (Mark one)**

- ☐ Does not apply --government civilian employee
- ☐ Does not apply -- Merchant Marine member
- ☐ Army
- ☐ Navy
- ☐ Marine Corps
- ☐ Air Force
- ☐ Coast Guard
- ☐ NOAA
- ☐ PHS

4. If on active duty in the Armed Forces/Uniformed Services, what is your status? (Mark one)

- ☐ Does not apply  
☐ Warrant Officer  
 Commissioned Officer  
☐ 01, 02, or 03  
☐ 04, 05, or 06  
 Enlisted member  
☐ E1, E2, or E3  
☐ E4, E5, or E6  
☐ E7, E8, or E9

5. If a U.S. Government civilian employee serving overseas (outside the 50 states and District of Columbia), which of the following Departments/Agencies do you work for? (Mark one)

- ☐ Does not apply—I am on active duty in the Armed Forces/Uniformed Services
- ☐ A.I.D.
- ☐ Air Force
- ☐ Army
- ☐ Canal Zone Government
- ☐ Department of Agriculture
- ☐ Department of Transportation
- ☐ DoD Dependent Schools (DODDS)
- ☐ International Communications Agency
- ☐ Justice Department
- ☐ Navy
- ☐ Panama Canal Company
- ☐ State Department
- ☐ Treasury Department
- ☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

6. On 7 November 1978, how long had you been located at your present duty station/ship? (Mark one)

- ☐ Less than 2 months  
☐ 2-4 months  
☐ More than 4 months

Questions 7 through 11 refer to the Federal Post Card Application For Absentee Ballot (FPCA). A facsimile is shown below for your reference.

FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF THE CARD (PRINT OR TYPE)		ATTACH TO A POSTAGE PREPAID MAIL ENVELOPE
(STAMP HERE)		
OFFICIAL ELECTION BALLOTING MATERIAL—VIA AIR MAIL		
To:		

7. How were you issued or given a Federal Post Card Application for Absentee Ballot (FPCA) as depicted above? (Mark one)

- ☐ Through employer or military channels  
☐ From embassy or consulate  
☐ From other source (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Was not given or issued one

- 8. Did you use the FPCA to apply for an absentee ballot for the November 1978 general election?**

- ☐ Does not apply—I did not receive an FPCA  
☐ Yes  
☐ No, I applied for an absentee ballot by other means  
☐ No, I did not apply for an absentee ballot

9. From which state or territory did you request an absentee ballot for the 1978 general election?

- ☐ Does not apply—I did not request an absentee ballot

I requested an absentee ballot from:

- ☐ Alabama  
☐ Alaska  
☐ Arizona  
☐ Arkansas  
☐ California  
☐ Colorado  
☐ Connecticut  
☐ Delaware  
☐ District of Columbia  
☐ Florida  
☐ Georgia  
☐ Guam  
☐ Hawaii  
☐ Idaho  
☐ Illinois  
☐ Indiana  
☐ Iowa  
☐ Kansas  
☐ Kentucky  
☐ Louisiana  
☐ Maine  
☐ Maryland  
☐ Massachusetts  
☐ Michigan  
☐ Minnesota  
☐ Mississippi  
☐ Missouri  
☐ Montana  
☐ Nebraska  
☐ Nevada  
☐ New Hampshire  
☐ New Jersey  
☐ New Mexico  
☐ New York  
☐ North Carolina  
☐ North Dakota  
☐ Ohio  
☐ Oklahoma  
☐ Oregon  
☐ Pennsylvania  
☐ Rhode Island  
☐ South Carolina  
☐ South Dakota  
☐ Tennessee  
☐ Texas  
☐ Utah  
☐ Vermont  
☐ Virginia  
☐ Virgin Islands (U.S.)  
☐ Washington  
☐ West Virginia  
☐ Wisconsin  
☐ Wyoming

10. If you requested an absentee ballot for the general election, please indicate in the spaces provided below: a) when you sent your request, and b) when you received your ballot. (Give the month and day—use your best guess if you are not sure.)

- ☐ Does not apply—I did not request an absentee ballot

I sent my request on:

MONTH		DAY	
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

- ☐ I didn't receive a ballot even though I requested one

I received my ballot on:

MONTH		DAY	
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

11. If you received an absentee ballot, when did you return the completed ballot? (Give the month and day—use your best guess if you are not sure.)

- ☐ Does not apply—I did not request an absentee ballot  
☐ Does not apply—I requested but did not receive an absentee ballot  
☐ Does not apply—I received a ballot but did not return it

☐ I completed and returned my ballot on: →

MONTH		DAY	
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9

12. From which of the following sources did you receive voting assistance? (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ Does not apply—I did not need voting assistance  
☐ Does not apply—I needed assistance but none was available  
☐ Military voting officer or counselor  
☐ Federal Agency  
☐ Embassy or Consulate  
☐ Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_



13. Were you satisfied with the availability of voting procedure information in 1978?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

14. How interested were you in the 1978 election?  
(Mark one)

- ☐ Very interested (Frequently follow current events and political news)  
☐ Somewhat interested (Occasionally follow current events and political news)  
☐ Not interested (Rarely or never follow current events and political news)

15. Did you vote in the November 1978 general election?  
(Mark one)

- ☐ Yes, by absentee ballot  
☐ Yes, in person at a voting station or polling place  
☐ No

16. How would you rate each of the following as a source of information about the 1978 election campaign and voting procedures? (Mark one for each source)

- Stars and Stripes ..... ☐ Not at All Useful ☐ Somewhat Useful ☐ Quite Useful ☐ Very Useful  
Army, Navy, Air Force or Federal Times ..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Base or unit newspapers ..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
American Forces Radio and Television Service ..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Civilian newspapers, magazines, radio or TV ..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Armed Forces voting posters ..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Military magazines ..... ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Other sources (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

17. If you did not vote in the November 1978 general election, please indicate the extent to which each of the following reasons applies to you.

☐ Does not apply—I voted.

- Did not know about the election . . . ☐ None ☐ A Little ☐ Some ☐ Fairly Much ☐ Very Much  
Not interested in American politics or the election . . . ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Had no candidate preference . . . ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Believed my vote would not matter . . . ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Possible effect of voting on Federal or State income tax obligation . . . ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Lacked information on voting procedures . . . ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
No State of legal residence for voting . . . ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
Other reasons (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

18. Did your spouse vote in the November 1978 general election? (Mark one)

- ☐ Does not apply—I had no spouse  
☐ Yes, by absentee ballot  
☐ Yes, in person at a voting station or polling place  
☐ No, because not eligible to vote  
☐ No, although eligible to vote  
☐ I do not know

19. Did your dependents of voting age, other than your spouse, vote in the November 1978 general election? (Mark one)

- ☐ Does not apply—I had no dependents of voting age  
☐ Yes, by absentee ballot  
☐ Yes, in person at a voting station or polling place  
☐ No  
☐ I do not know



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

November 1, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR Voting Officers and Counselors

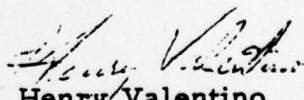
SUBJECT: Survey of Unit Voting Officers

The Federal Voting Assistance Act requires that the President and Congress be given a report following each general election dealing with absentee voting. The same law requires surveys of absentee voters after these elections to provide statistical data for the report.

Since regulations require each DoD component to designate voting officers or counselors at every level of command, we believe most voting officers are in close touch with the problems associated with absentee voting. In the past we have conducted telephone spot surveys of unit voting officers to obtain additional information on the Voting Program.

We would like to know more about your experiences as a voting officer, and we would like your suggestions on how you think the Voting Program might be improved. Please complete and return the attached questionnaire as soon as possible--it will only take a few minutes of your time.

Thank you for your help and support.

  
Henry Valentino  
Director, Federal Voting  
Assistance Program

Attachment

## SURVEY OF UNIT VOTING OFFICERS

This questionnaire is to be completed by unit voting officers or counselors only. Please fill out the form today. When completed, fold along the dotted lines, tape the bottom edge, and mail. No postage is necessary.

1. What is your rank or GS grade? O- / W- / GS-
2. In which Service do you serve as voting officer? ☐ Army ☐ Navy ☐ Marine Corps ☐ Air Force
3. For which unit do you serve as voting officer? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Approximately how many people are assigned to this unit? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Since January 1978, about what percent of your work time has been spent on your voting officer duties? \_\_\_\_\_ %.
6. How long (in months) have you been unit voting officer? \_\_\_\_\_ months.
7. What special training did you receive for your duties as voting officer? (Check all that apply)  
☐ None ☐ Training Film ☐ Informal Briefing ☐ Classroom Instruction
8. Did you have all the information you needed to answer questions about absentee voting?  
☐ Yes ☐ No What other information did you need? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you receive the 1978 DoD Voting Assistance Guide?  
☐ No ☐ Yes When did you receive it? (Give month) \_\_\_\_\_
10. About how many people came to you this year for information or help concerning absentee voting? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What kinds of absentee voting information or assistance were you most often asked to provide? (List three)  
 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_
12. What were the most frequent complaints from people in your unit concerning difficulties in registering to vote or in obtaining an absentee ballot? (List three)  
 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Based on your experience as a voting officer, which three states do you feel presented the most problems to absentee voters?  
 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Were sufficient quantities of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) available to your unit?  
☐ Yes ☐ No
15. We would appreciate any suggestions you might have on how to improve the Voting Assistance Program. Please use the space provided on the back of this form for your comments.

CC

1-4

5-6

7

8-11

12-13

14-15

16

17

18

19

20

21-23

23-24

25-26

27

28-29

30-31

32-33

34-35

36-37

38-39

40-41

42-43

44-45

46-47

48-49

50

51-52

53-54

55-56

57-58



**APPENDIX B**

**SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE  
1978 POST-ELECTION VOTING SURVEY (FORM A)**

- 1. Instructions For Military Sample**
- 2. Instructions For Civilian Sample**

**1978 Post-Election Voting Survey:  
Instructions for the Survey of Active Duty Military Personnel**

The Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1733cc-1733cc-26), requires the Department of Defense as executive agent to collect data on absentee voting participation after each general election. The Act requires information on all Americans who vote through the absentee process, including military personnel, civilian employees of the United States Government, and non-Federally employed civilians. This information is routinely collected through a biennial, post-election voting survey. As in the past, this year's survey will be conducted in November immediately following the general election.

The majority of absentee voters are in the military Services, therefore military personnel will comprise the bulk of the survey sample. The number of servicemembers to be sampled from each Service will be the same as it was for the 1976 post-election survey--2,000 enlisted personnel and 1,500 officers (including warrant officers). Each Service will be responsible for drawing its portion of the survey sample and preparing self-stick mailing labels (as opposed to those requiring moisture). The actual mailing of the survey will be handled by a private contractor.

The procedure for selecting the sample will be left up to the survey branch of each Service. However, it is recommended that a random selection procedure based on social security number terminal digits be used. Regardless of the sampling procedure employed, it is, of course, important that at least one complete pass be made through the personnel file before the quota is achieved.

Once the sample is selected and the mailing labels are printed, they should be forwarded to the following address:

Federal Voting Assistance Program  
Survey Center  
ATTN: John Richards  
300 North Washington Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

The sampling process should be accomplished by the date of the general election, November 7, 1978.

If you have any questions about the requirements, please contact the survey Project Director, John Richards, at (703) 549-3611.

**1978 Post-Election Voting Survey:  
Instructions for the Survey of Federal Civilian Employees Serving Overseas**

1. **Background.** The Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1733cc-1733cc-26), requires the Department of Defense as executive agent to collect data on absentee voting participation after each general election. In addition to those in the Armed Forces, the Act requires information from civilian employees of the United States Government serving at overseas locations. Yours is one of 13 Federal agencies selected to participate in the 1978 survey. These instructions will provide the necessary guidance for your role in the survey.
2. **Agency Responsibility.** Each participating agency will be responsible for drawing its portion of the survey sample, preparing self-stick mailing labels (as opposed to those requiring moisture), and printing cover letters on agency letterhead stationery (see the attached sample letter). These items should be delivered to the Federal Voting Assistance Program Survey Center by November 7, 1978. The address for mailing or delivery is:

Federal Voting Assistance Program  
Survey Center  
ATTN: John Richards  
300 North Washington Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

3. **Sampling Plan.** To ensure a representative sample of overseas civilian employees, a stratified random sampling plan will be used. Participating Federal agencies will randomly sample their overseas employees who are U.S. citizens in proportion to their share of the total population being studied. The attached sampling plan indicates the sample size required from each agency (the figures for the total number of overseas employees for each agency were derived from the August 1978 monthly release on Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics, published by the Civil Service Commission). Use the following procedure to select your agency's quota of overseas employees:

- a) Go through your file of overseas employees selecting only those whose social security numbers end in the first two-digit number on the following list.

58	71
67	18
40	24
92	87
79	54

- b) Next, go through the file again selecting only those whose



Federal Civilian Employees Serving Overseas

Quotas by Agency

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Quota</u>
Army	16,325	31.1	776
DoD Dependent Schools (DODDS)	8,263	15.7	393
Navy	6,846	13.0	326
State Department	5,761	11.0	274
Air Force	5,568	10.6	265
Panama Canal Company	2,087	4.0	99
Canal Zone Government	1,657	3.2	79
A.I.D.	1,381	2.6	66
Department of Agriculture	1,116	2.1	53
Int'l. Communications Agency	1,039	2.0	49
Treasury Department	916	1.7	44
Justice Department	803	1.5	38
Department of Transportation	799	1.5	38
	<hr/> 52,566	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/> 2,500

social security numbers end in the second two-digit number on the list.

c) Repeat the process using successive numbers from the above list until you have reached your agency's quota.

d) It is important that you go through your entire file of overseas employees at least once before reaching your quota. If you reach your quota before making one complete pass through your overseas personnel file, contact the project director for an alternate sampling procedure.

4. Coordination. If you have any questions about the requirements or procedures, please contact the survey Project Director, John Richards at (703) 549-3611.

APPENDIX C

FEDERAL POST CARD APPLICATION FORM (FPCA)



FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF CARD

POST CARD APPLICATION FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT

State or Commonwealth of .....  
(Fill in name of State or Commonwealth)

(1) I hereby request an absentee ballot to vote in the coming election:  
(GENERAL) (PRIMARY)\* (SPECIAL) ELECTION.  
(Strike out inapplicable words)

(2) \*If a ballot is requested for a primary election,  
print your political party affiliation or preference  
in this box:   
(If primary election is secret in your State, do not answer)

(3) I am a citizen of the United States, eligible to vote in above State,  
and am:

a. A member of the Armed Forces of the United States

b. A member of the merchant marine of the United States

c. A citizen of the United States temporarily residing outside of the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia

d. A spouse or dependent of a person listed in (a), or (b) above

e. A spouse or dependent residing with or accompanying a person described in (c) above

(4) I was born on .....  
(Day) (Month) (Year)

(5) For ..... years preceding the above election my home (not military)  
residence in the above State has been .....

(Street and number or rural route, etc.)

in the county or parish of.....

The voting precinct or election district for this residence is

(Enter if known)

(6) Remarks: .....

(7) Mail my ballot to the following official address:  
For those assigned in the U.S.:

(Unit (Co., Sq., Trp., Bn., etc.), Governmental Agency, or Office)

(Military Base, Station, Camp, Fort, Ship, Airfield, etc.)

For those assigned elsewhere:

(APO, or FPO number)

(8) I am NOT requesting a ballot from any other State and am not  
voting in any other manner in this election, except by absentee  
process, and have not voted and do not intend to vote in this  
election at any other address.

(9) .....  
(Signature of person requesting ballot)

(10) .....  
(Full name, typed or printed, with rank or grade, and service number)

(11) Subscribed and sworn to before me on .....  
(Day, month, and year)

(Signature of official administering  
oath)

(Typed or printed name of official  
administering oath)

(Title or rank, service number, and organization of administering official)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Before filling out this form see your voting officer in regard to the voting laws of your State and absentee registration and voting procedure.
- Type or print all entries except signatures. FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF CARD.
- Address card to proper State official. Your voting officer or commanding officer will furnish you his title and address.
- Mail card as soon as your State will accept your application.
- NO postage is required for the card.

**APPENDIX D**

**WEIGHTING FACTORS FOR MILITARY SAMPLE:  
1978 POST-ELECTION VOTING SURVEY (FORM A)**

**WEIGHTS FOR MILITARY SAMPLE\***  
(DoD Plus Coast Guard)

Pay Grade	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Coast Guard
Warrant Officer	.4584	.2886	.0754	--	.0267
01-03	.5143	.2960	.0918	.4552	.0257
04-06	.3798	.2569	.0753	.3955	.0205
E1-E3	8.5697	3.2572	1.4705	2.6568	.2567
E4-E6	4.2583	1.9370	.7866	1.8241	.1278
E7-E9	2.6320	1.3843	.5722	1.4561	.0982

\* Weights applied to make service-pay grade cells in survey sample proportional to those in the total military population (DoD components plus Coast Guard). Weighting factors computed from survey sample Ns and recent population Ns supplied by the Coast Guard and the Department of Defense.